THE CULTURE AND POETICS OF JAZZ IMPROVISATION

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Abstract

How is the jazz language inventive in spite of the objective limits that delineate and govern it? This fundamental question is examined in light of the musical practices of young jazz musicians with whom I conducted fieldwork in Los Angeles from 2002-2003. Their insights enabled me to outline four dimensions of theoretical enquiry into improvisation: the formal, the historical, the phenomenological and the hermeneutic. By placing these four levels in a dialogue, a productive dialectic emerges which provides a rejoinder to deconstructive musicology's inability to understand the jazz language's capacity to transcend its structure and create and express new meanings. As improvising jazz musicians blur the distinctions between analysis and performance, the process of improvisation can also help to cultivate a more productive dialogue between the 'outside' and 'inside' of music, structure and experience, texts and extemporisations, and cultural reality and *poeisis*.

The dissertation follows each of the four analytical-interpretive levels and explores the ways in which musicians relate to them. I begin with an analytical exegesis of the objective rules and codes which constitute the basis of substantial portions of contemporary jazz musicians' vocabularies. This discussion illustrates the symbolic nature of the jazz language and its role as a repository of shared understandings in which individuals and the jazz community form their stylistic identities.

This analysis in turn engenders a historiography of the language and the process of canon formation. I illustrate this process by paying special attention to John Coltrane's composition 'Giant Steps', which I relate to Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital. However, despite a growing anxiety among jazz musicians concerning the workings of power, ideology, and strategies to sound 'hip' in improvised performances, these same musicians were dedicated to experiencing improvisation beyond the inertia of power hierarchies and discourses.

A phenomenological analysis, in response to this inertia, focuses attention on aspects of playing music as it emerges in *play*. However, rather than grounding these experiences within the realm of immediate, intuitive knowledge – which neglects the mediating role of the jazz language in *shaping* experience – I have found it necessary, through the final hermeneutical level based on Ricoeur's threefold mimesis, to return dialectially to the formal, analytical aspects of the jazz language as a symbolic system. This language thus enables us to both relate to the world and foster interpretive access to self-understanding.

In response to the initial question, I illustrate that the transformative power of improvisation resides not in a representation or reduplication of cultural reality; rather it addresses itself to the deeply rooted potentialities of reality absent from the actualities of everyday life.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy and entitled "The Culture and Poetics of Jazz Improvisation", represents my own work and has not been previously submitted to this or any other institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

Iain Foreman

April 2005

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INTRODUCTION

> The work of art endures because the Idea it incarnates is saved from oblivion by the durable elements of the cosmos. Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*

> The value of music is, I believe, to be found in terms of the human experiences involved in its creation. There is a difference between music that is occasional and music that enhances human consciousness, music that is simply for having and music that is for being. John Blacking, *How Musical is Man?*

> To play jazz is to suggest an alternative reality, to reinvent myself, to be ready to do it till the bitter end. Gilad Atzmon[1]

Towards a cultural and poetic understanding of jazz improvisation

The general purpose of this dissertation is to pursue a reading of jazz improvisation within the context of culture and poetics. My aim is to develop a cultural, philosophical and analytical understanding of jazz that enables us to consider the ways in which improvised musical performances capture a glimpse of our human existence and contribute to our self-understandings. This perspective provides a timely complement to both a formalist musicological understanding of jazz improvisation, and its deconstruction by post-structuralist critical musicologists. It is my aim to suggest ways in which jazz music theory and representation can be broadened to embrace cultural, poetic and philosophical interpretations.

Stated generally, my thesis considers the extent to which the jazz language, restructured through analysable compositional forms, leads to an enlargement of our

[1] Ricoeur (1965: 141); Blacking (1973: 50); Atzmon (2004: http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/features/story/0,11710,1351248,00).

experience in accordance with the narrative nature of improvised performances. The cultural power of improvised music does not lie in its ability to express a direct resemblance between itself, as a sign, and an object in the cultural world; improvisation is not simply the reduplication of reality. Rather, its cultural power is inextricably linked to its immanent power to represent a meaning. Thus, the forms and structures of improvisation enclose the forms that structure meaning, mood, and affect.

This thesis grew from my musical interest in both the structural and transformative processes that characterise improvised performances and their relationship to broader concerns of culture, selfhood, feelings and the imagination. The ways in which musical forms, phrases, scales and patterns transform themselves from the bleak landscape of scores, litanies of exercises, chord sequences and etudes to meaningful musical narratives has often eluded ethnographic and musicological reflection despite its centrality to the performance process. When considering aspects of the jazz language and idiomatic jazz vocabularies which manifest themselves in the course of an improvised performance, the central question that confronted me was whether the surplus of meaning and experience which characterises successful improvisation resides in its internal form, or whether it belongs to external factors which are emotional, cultural, and separate from its mode of communication. In the final analysis, I consider the extent to which these seemingly opposed realms can be dialectically integrated, thus enabling us to understand the relationship between textual forms and structures, the communication of mood and affect, and the maintenance of community and cultural identity.

The thesis also grew from my commitment to the idea that art and aesthetics have something to say; something beyond the common sense, everyday world of objects in which science holds a discursive monopoly. In both academic enquiry and the popular consciousness, it is generally understood that science pronounces and affirms what is real while art is considered to lack denotative powers. Its powers, on the other hand, are understood to belong to a subjective realm devoid of claims to truth and knowledge. By exploring the ways in which improvised music suspends our complex experiences of time, for instance, I hope to demonstrate that jazz enables us to experience the world in a different way by offering an alternative reality, as suggested by Gilad Atzmon in the quote above. Indeed, as an art form, jazz improvisation can augment reality by capturing it in a network of abbreviated or condensed signs and symbols. Thus, while improvised jazz music may to some seem as if it were a retreat into itself, designed to evoke feelings within an aesthetic realm completely opposed to ordinary reality, it is worth considering the extent to which, as this ordinary world of mundane experience is suspended and surpassed through improvising, new dimensions of experience emerge and a new reality is created.

At the root of this issue is the persistent and recurrent concern in musicology and ethnomusicology concerning the relationship, or distinction, between formal structures – and the metaphysical and transcendental claim of aesthetic autonomy – and the cultural meaning or the worldliness of music. This problematic has eluded consistent answers precisely by virtue of music's non-representational character, its assumed non-denotative power, and the pernicious split between art and reality, aesthetics and conceptual knowledge. Is music's meaning to be found within the music itself, or from outside cultural and emotional referents? As the answers

remained inconclusive, I began to investigate a range of analytical, musicological, semiotic and sociological models to consider the ways in which they can help solve this riddle.

Using my own experience as an improvising saxophonist as a point of departure, I have begun to reflect on the extent to which improvisation is, at its best, about the power of the imagination to make music, the material culture of music, speak. This power resides in the performer's ability to respond to questions posed to him or her through the music. Furthermore, as this dialogue unfolds between the music and the musicians, feelings and emotions emerge. As a framing of reality, performances intensify our experience and bring forth emotions otherwise hidden.

This description of improvisation led me to consider whether its cultural significance is related to its aesthetic power. In other words, can we not suggest that the experiences and the realities improvisation frames and unfolds are experiences that frame our efforts to exist culturally? Improvising, thus, must be considered as a reality in the making. To support this thesis, it became necessary to interweave a variety of different insights which can essentially be reduced to two: the first is concerned with the poetics of improvisation and the second with the culture of improvisation. Poetics involves an understanding of the human capacity to make a world in which we can poetically dwell, while cultural interpretation involves an understanding of the ways in which traditions are shaped and formed, of the symbolic character of human understanding, and of the sedimentation of the productive imagination objectified in signs and works.

Points of departure

However, there are a number of obstacles that lie in the way of these refined definitions of poetics and culture. Musicians and musicologists alike have conceptualised music-making according to two separate conceptual realms: musical representation and musical experience.[2] Accordingly, we have categorised the former under a kind of methodical, analytic mind, and the latter under something less tangible and even spiritual in character. This division has recently penetrated, and proliferated in, the popular imagination with distinctions between left- and right-hand brain hemispheres which divide language processing, and other process oriented activities, in the left-hand side, and music, and other creative activities, in the right-hand side.

These distinctions have left any mediation between the two conceptually challenging, and have reinforced a simplistic and reductive dichotomy between explanation and understanding, product and process, structures and creativity, and aesthetic reality and conceptual reality. Moreover, since musical reality exists on a different level to a linguistic reality, it is assumed that we are denied access to music conceptually and can only experience it. The explanatory models of form and structure are thus deemed irrelevant and self-serving. What we have been left with is a series of distinctions between conceptual knowledge, aesthetic knowledge, cultural knowledge and ethical knowledge, and a failure to understand the practical or heuristic function of, for example, jazz improvisation, since it is assumed to function

[2] Nicholas Cook describes this distinction as the 'two sides of the musical fabric' (Cook 1990: 122-60), a phrase he adapts from Merleau-Ponty's characterisation of the writer working on the wrong side of his material (1990: 135). Schutz also makes a distinction between the 'inner time' and 'outer time' of musical experience (Schutz 1964), the former referring to a subjective temporality while the latter refers to an objective time. Finally, Charles Seeger alludes to this distinction via his 'linguocentric predicament' (1977) in which musical experience and language are considered to be incommensurable.

in an autonomous aesthetic realm. While this notion of autonomy has been deconstructed recently (McClary 1991; Kramer 1996), the linkage between music and culture only approximates the relationship between a sign and its object. Such a theory of resemblance implies the mere duplication of reality through music and is remiss in considering the ways in which music augments reality from within.

A response to this problematic considers improvised performances as productive workings through which both self-knowledge and the identity of culture is negotiated. This insight has a significant impact on the study of music in culture since it regards musical traditions as repositories of active and creative self-representations which constantly renew themselves and contribute something new to the experiences of those who belong to that tradition. The cultural significance of music, from this perspective, is not merely added on. Music does not simply reflect or reduplicate meanings, social structures, identities, genders, and race; rather, it produces new cultural understandings and new meanings.

This dissertation, thus, entails a point of departure. Yet rather than eschewing old theories and following new trends, my intention is to consider a model of improvisation that mediates between different conceptual approaches and maintains, or resuscitates, a variety of insights that have contributed to the study of jazz improvisation. In particular, I wish to both critically interrogate and productively reconsider the contributions a formalist, autonomous representation of jazz improvisation can offer in light of my thesis. However, I am insistent in suggesting two new interpretive insights into a study of jazz improvisation: one conceptual and the other methodological. The conceptual insight explores beyond an understanding

of improvisation in terms of the empirical cultural reality it may reference and looks instead at the ways in which improvisation changes our way of looking at the world and orienting ourselves in the world. The methodological insight emerges through a dedication to a dialectical model that, rather than opposing formal structures and cultural meaning, representation and experience, links them together in a productive relationship that ties together three aspects: our primary experiences of the world (in particular its temporal nature), the formal structure of musical composition and the experiences it unfolds and feelings its shapes (in light of its independent and unique temporal structure), and our cultural self-identity.

As I searched for a more cultural and poetic basis for jazz improvisation, I came across many of the limitations of supplanting a formalist aesthetic -- developed in the nineteenth century according to a neo-Kantian positivism which identified a series of rules, generalities and logical axioms in order to facilitate access to musical meaning – on to jazz improvisation.[3] This critique echoes those made in ethnomusicology, the self-proclaimed critical musicology, and the so-called 'New Musicology' in North America. While ethnomusicology has consistently sought new aesthetic and analytical models in which to discuss and represent music (Koetting 1970 and see Blum 1992 for overview), New and critical musicologists have worked according to a deconstructivist paradigm borrowed from literary theory, which denounces formalism and views music as a culturally constructed and historically contingent artefact (McClary 1985, 1991; Cusick 1991; Tomlinson 1984, 1993; Kramer 1996, 2002).

[3] The distinction between Hanslick's definition of music as 'tonally moving forms' (1957 [1854]) and Blacking's as 'humanly organised sound' (1973) represents the extreme poles of a formalist perspective of music based on the objectivity of the natural sciences and a cultural one based on interpretive humanism. Ultimately, this dissertation seeks to bridge these two perspectives.

Outline

The first chapter is devoted to the methodological insights and lacunae that structured the development of this thesis. Initially trained as an ethnographer, I found myself in a curious relationship with regards to the field. While many issues of objectivity, ethics, and emics and etics arose and remained unresolved, I gained invaluable insights from dedicating a condensed period of time 'in the field', from playing and 'hanging out' with musicians in Los Angeles, and from interviewing them. These interviews provide a wealth of insight which supports the arguments I develop in this dissertation.

In chapter 2 I review scholarship on improvisation. In particular, I draw attention to the ways in which scholars have identified the structural or compositional aspects of improvisation as points of departure from which more imaginative variations unfold. In many senses, these studies are themselves points of departure for the present study in which I seek to probe further into the productive imagination.

Chapter 3 sets the stage for a cultural understanding of the jazz language. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's notion of the 'imagined community' (1983), I explore the ways in which, as technology advances, the language of jazz bonds together disparate peoples from disparate places. Thus, it assumes both a symbolic and ideological significance. In light of this, with regards to a theory of performativity, we are confronted with the question: do we merely reiterate discursive forms, or does the symbolic character of improvisation provide the very opening for cultural transformation?

In chapter 4 I introduce some of the compositional aspects of improvisation and illustrate the ways in which they are learnt by jazz musicians. I weave together formal musical designs with reflections by musicians on the craft of learning to improvise. It becomes evident that there is a hierarchy of complexity built into a number of these compositional devices and in chapter 5 I situate these forms within the cultural matrices individuals build around them. Chapter 6 places improvisation within the recent musicological debate concerning *Werktreue* and canonisation. Through the illustration of John Coltrane's 'Giant Steps', I consider the ways in which his composition has achieved canonic status which bestows symbolic capital on its performers.

In chapter 7 I move towards an interrogation and departure from both neo-Kantian formalist suppositions that consider aesthetics as a self-sufficient realm separate from conceptual knowledge and culture – a supposition espoused by jazz critics and educators who emphasise improvised music's structural coherence – and its social deconstruction in the form of critical musicology and so-called 'New Musicology' which, by contextualising aesthetics within a cultural world, and by denouncing aesthetic autonomy as ideological conceit, ultimately fails to account for the productive power improvised musical performances have in affecting reality and engendering self-knowledge.

Since, as a community, jazz musicians share an aspect of reality through the use of common signs and symbols – the jazz language in its melodic, rhythmic, and timbral manifestations – improvising is not a case of using and manipulating these

symbols at will, according to our subjective intention; rather, I consider, in chapters 8 and 9, the extent to which we, as cultural beings, are shaped, or constituted, by using these symbols. I reconsider the symbolic efficacy of Coltrane's 'Giant Steps' by comparing, with the help of a group of jazz musicians, a number of recorded solos of 'Giant Steps' in order to explore the ways in which a particular style of playing has become sedimented in the jazz tradition. Far from reiterating discursive norms, I suggest that improvising over this composition is a re-enactment of a community in which central values are cultivated, affirmed and embraced, and new realities are configured.

In the final section, comprising chapters 9, 10 and 11, I develop a model of improvisation which can incorporate structural *and* experiential, formal analytical *and* cultural, and aesthetic *and* conceptual or practical dimensions, by concentrating on improvisation's world-disclosing capacity. This dialectical model, based in part on Paul Ricoeur's threefold mimesis, outlined in his three-volume *Time and Narrative* (1984, 1985, 1988), enables me to integrate three levels: the source of improvisation, the creative or transcendental aspects, and the effect of improvisation in the world of experience and affect. As a consequence, it becomes possible to overcome both formal idealism – by considering the relationship *between* structural coherency, aesthetics and culture – and its deconstruction – which is unable to understand and account for the ability for music to affect reality and imagine new possibilities. This model in turn entails a discussion of the relationship between sedimentation and innovation at the level of style and genre, and ideology and utopia at the level of practice and culture. I explore the ways in which improvisation productively mediates these poles and enables us to constitute a meaningful reality.

Therefore, this dissertation explores the jazz language according to three different perspectives: first, for the purposes of understanding the jazz language as an objective system according to a formalist model; second, according to a deconstruction of this model and a consideration of how this language can be manipulated in terms of socially mediated musical contexts; and third, in the final analysis, how both the formal levels and its deconstruction are eclipsed by an ontological level which considers the language in terms of experience. This ontological perspective considers the ways in which improvisation is always about something, some experience. However, while all experience may be articulable hypothetically, experience is not *reducible* to its articulation; rather, it is brought into being for us through its symbolic representation, through a language.

In other words, we exist in the languages, signs, symbols and cultural works of mankind and through them come to understand ourselves and our world. Thus, our being, constituted in symbolic languages, is revealed in musical conversation and performance. When we improvise we bridge the gap between the familiar world in which we already stand, and the surpluses of meaning that resist assimilation into the horizons of our world; between the present time and the world of possibility. While studies of improvisation have thus far managed to temper associations with capricious flights of the imagination by paying attention to the compositional aspects inherent in the course of performance, these studies have failed to bring to light the ontological dimensions of improvisation and its world-disclosing capability. Furthermore, these ontological insights of the world-disclosive power of performances can be linked to

culture. Paraphrasing Geertz (1973: 452), we can suggest that the culture of a people is an ensemble of performances themselves ensembles.

CHAPTER ONE

Methodology

Introduction

A study of the culture and poetics of jazz improvisation necessitates a methodology which situates the researcher within a context in which improvised music becomes meaningful for those who perform it. As I shall illustrate below, a number of factors led to my decision to focus my study within a portion of the jazz community in Los Angeles from September 2002 to December 2003. While many aspects of my fieldwork were informed by experiences prior to this period itself, this particular concentrated episode afforded me with a direct approach to my line of enquiry. However, the results of my research and the interpretations I offer rely on my own personal experiences in addition to those of others.

Throughout my research, I observed and participated in performances of live jazz and continued to keep up to date in the world of jazz by listening to the radio and reading magazines. However, there were often times when I reflected on my own role as a fieldworker, especially in light of my previous fieldwork experiences in South India in 1998 and 2000. In the present instance, much more appeared to be at stake with regards to my own identity and, as a result, I gained some useful insights into the notion of fieldwork itself and its role in ethnomusicology.

At home yet not at home

My own negotiation of different possible identities and perspectives enabled me to furnish a productive standpoint with regards to my subject matter. Simultaneously at home and not at home, a scholar and a performer, and a musicologist and

ethnomusicologist, I attempted to productively appropriate all there was to offer in order to develop my unfolding persona. I attempted to remain open to all the horizons that lay before me while constantly keeping in check where I had come from. The field became an area of openness, a place in which I was to lose myself before finding it again, a place in which new worlds were revealed, promoting enriched understandings. This fieldwork experience demonstrated to me the complexity of the issues surrounding the perennial tension between subjective and empirical or objective research methods.

Historically, ethnomusicology, as an empirically based tradition, has sought out other cultures in order to interpret traditions, behaviours, rituals and musical systems of thought. Often these interpretations have led to a deeper analysis of what it is to be musical and ultimately what it is to be human (Blacking 1973), but what lies at the heart of them is a great deal of reporting before any interpretation is made possible. Musicology, on the other hand, historically has made assumptions that the reader is familiar with the canon and needs very little historical background and reportage in order to make his or her interpretation. Both, however, have largely remained within some sort of scientific endeavour; to objectify, render scrutable musical behaviour or musical scores, and then to analyse.

Of course, this positivist tradition has lost its potency as a more humanistic and even post-modernist paradigm has taken hold of (ethno)musicology's endeavours (Feld 1981; Lortat-Jacob 1995; L. Kramer 1990; McClary 1991). Kisliuk states that: 'the study of humanity is in a move towards reflexive, nonobjectivist scholarship...The most in-depth and intimate field experiences intersect with both a

researcher's life stories and a researcher's subjects, until self-other boundaries are blurred' (1997: 43).

However, despite this affinity and superficial crossing of cultural boundaries, ethnomusicologists still define themselves for the most part in terms of studying 'other' traditions not normally included in the Western canon. This requires, both on the part of the researcher and the reader, a commitment to understanding aspects of a culture that are not necessarily compatible with ours. Language, food, clothing, ritual contexts, religion, social codes, gender hierarchies, kinship, political alliances, geography, climate and so on provide a number of variable factors that impact on a researcher's understanding and interpretation, and effect a reader's ability to understand elements of a musical tradition which are perhaps previously alien to them. A major task for the ethnomusicologist, then, is communicating these differences, the exoticism, and rendering foreign elements intelligible. Musical instruments, notation systems, performance practice, ritual contexts, gender associations, social hierarchies and so on require explanation. Musicologists, by contrast, take for granted so many of these background contexts that their attention is focussed elsewhere, usually on the abstracted music itself.

In recent years, musicologists and ethnomusicologists appear to have been enjoying a more productive dialogue, and ethnomusicologists no longer feel obliged to immerse themselves in traditional or rural cultures removed from the mainstream. On the one hand, many musicologists recognise that taken-for-granted practices are actually imbued with a vast number of often impenetrable social matrices, ritual contexts, gender associations and so on (McClary 1991; Small 1995). From this

perspective, musicologists have begun to study music as an *act* rather than a thing, musicking rather than music (Small 1995). This new generation of musicologists is beginning to ask: who is doing it? where? and who is listening? By looking at music this way, musicologists can begin to understand the relationship between music, people, history and the larger culture in which it is made meaningful. Similarly many ethnomusicologists have redefined themselves as musicologists since they are tired of the 'ethno' associations and colonial links to otherness. Furthermore, a great number of ethnomusicologists continue to emerge from non-Western countries thus rendering the prefix obsolete.

Another emerging trend is the prevalence of conducting fieldwork 'at home'.[4] Increasing numbers of graduate students in Europe and North America are finding ethnographic potential closer to home and choose not to travel overseas for their research.[5] For a number of reasons, including the stark realities of funding and economics, students are becoming more inclined to study the minority populations of their home cities.[6]

Coming even closer to home, musicians trained in ethnomusicology are beginning to reflect upon their own musical heritage where the need to learn foreign traditions, languages, social codes and musical traditions and experiences becomes

[4] Jackson explores at length the notion of 'Anthropology at Home' (1987) and Ablon's ethnography of middle-class Americans is an oft-cited example (1977). Strathern studied kinship systems in the English village of Elmdon, Essex (1981).

[5] Of course, cultural anthropologists in the US, especially those within the Boasian tradition, traditionally studied Native American cultural practices while European anthropologists ventured into their colonial territories to conduct research. However, undoubtedly, the overwhelming attraction of ethnography, until recently, has been the promise of adventure into exotic, foreign lands.

[6] A successful conference for the British Forum for Ethnomusicology was held in Aberdeen during my research entitled 'Ethnomusicology at Home' (2004). There were a striking number of young graduate students opting to stay closer to home for their research.

unnecessary (Burnim 1985; Berliner 1994; Cottrell 2004).[7] This obviously places the 'home' researcher in a somewhat vulnerable position since many more traditional academics could question the validity of their interpretations since they are so clouded with personal memories and subjective prejudices. Furthermore, these traditionalists may take umbrage with the paucity of sheer hard work required in learning a new language and meeting people in the field when they simply cite themselves as informants (Cheiner 2002; Agawu 1995), or of learning new instruments and musical traditions (cf. Rice 1994; Kisliuk 1998) when they can draw on the experiences of learning and performing traditions and techniques they began as infants along with the rest of their community.

Mantle Hood famously wrote 'the training of ears, eyes, hands, and voice and fluency gained in these skills assure a real comprehension of theoretical studies' (1960: 55) as his justification for the model of 'bi-musicality', the ability to be conversant in multiple musical traditions in order to gain theoretical insights into another culture. The presupposition here, although overlooked by Hood, is that if we are fluent in our own culture anyway, then why do we need to travel abroad? Furthermore, if the 'natives' are already fluent in their own musical language then why do we not just leave theorising to them since it is unlikely that we will ever achieve the degree of fluency they enjoy? It appears that the moment of distance, the otherness of the musical tradition, requires remaining intact if Hood's model is to work and we are to gain any real insights into a musical culture.

[7] Of course, there have been 'native ethnomusicologists' for over half a century (Nketia 1963, 1974; Agawu 1984, 1987; Jairazbhoy 1971) but, in terms of a Western academic audience, these studies were based on foreign, exotic, non-Western musical traditions.

Reflecting on one's own experiences, as an alternative to empirically exploring 'the Other', begins to look even more appealing when we take into account Pierre Bourdieu's insightful critiques of the empirical method in fieldwork (1977). Bourdieu states that it is misleading to extract 'official accounts' of behaviour directly from informants as these accounts are usually derived from some overarching ideology that implicitly constrains them to say what they think they 'ought to' say in the presence of a fieldworker. Informants cannot necessarily accurately reflect on their own behaviour, because the majority of it is 'taken for granted'. It is precisely that it is 'taken for granted', and not reflected upon in abstract and theoretical terms, that, according to Bourdieu, makes behaviour and practice effective (1977: 16-58). Bourdieu's epistemological critique thus places serious constraints on the efficacy of 'participant observation' and the idea that the researcher or fieldworker can claim knowledge of a group of people's cultural system, or mode of behaviour, simply by virtue of having participated in it and lived within it for a number of months or years in an attempt to develop an 'insider's point of view'.

In anthropology this anxiety over our cherished epistemological beliefs led to a self-proclaimed 'crisis of representation'. Clifford (1986), Marcus and Fischer (1996) and others were outspoken about anthropology's tendency to exploit their research subjects, rendering them mute in the development of our knowledge of them, 'the Other'. Their answer lay in post-structuralist critiques of representation which gained significant momentum in the fashionable circles of literary criticism and cultural studies. The French theorists, most notably Derrida, Foucault and Baudrillard, became the darlings of an epistemological critique of anthropology's *modus operandi*, the ethnography, and this new wave of 'writing culture' theorists –

as they became known following the title of Clifford and Marcus' epoch-making text (1986) – launched guerrilla-style attacks on their intellectual ancestors.

However, as Chou Cheiner rightly points out, most of the work that addresses the crisis of representation in ethnographic field research remains 'exclusively founded on the study of other cultures. Perspectives on fieldwork from those who study their own culture are still comparatively rare in ethnomusicology' (Cheiner 2002: 456).[8] Melonee Burnim has provided one of the most candid accounts of fieldwork at home and the concomitant problems that inhere therein (1985). Her discussion of her role and identity as a fieldworker in her research on gospel communities in the United States illustrated her ability to gain privileged access to cultural activities by virtue of her ethnicity and performance ability which consequently provided her with deeper insights, or an insider's perspective, into the life of her informants.

As a member of the cultural tradition under investigation, gospel church music, she explores her reception in the field, her informant's reactions towards her and the ways in which her role as a researcher was minimised since she became active in the church. Sharing ethnic identity with those she studied enabled her to enter the field relatively unnoticed. However, once her performance talents were recognised, her role from passive observer (outsider) to active participant (insider) enabled a new experience. Despite this, she was still conscious of her dual status as an insider by virtue of her ethnicity and performance abilities, and as an outsider by

[8] Even in anthropology, urban studies of Western capitalist modernity are usually reserved for sociologists. Judith Okley's pioneering studies of traveller-gypsies integrated a traditional ethnographic approach 'at home'; however, the subject matter still remained distinctly 'other' (1983).

not sharing the same church denomination and through belonging to the academic community.[9]

Burnim claims to have achieved the ideal position of participant observer by 'transferring [her] knowledge as actor to that of analyst, thereby bypassing a referential step required of the non-tradition bearer analyst' (1985: 443). The challenge that remained was how to combine her role as actor, analyst, performer and researcher. This raises the question as to whether a lack of objectivity is inherent in studying one's own culture. An unsuccessful combination of these roles may result in the same difficulties that a cultural outsider faces. Of course, it is useful to maintain some suspicion with regards to the dualistic tendencies of any discussion of 'outsider' and 'insider'. In reality, this distinction is complex and cloudy and is better conceptualised as a continuum or dialectic as opposed to a simplistic dualism.

Despite this, Burnim's experiences resonated with my own and raised questions regarding fieldwork methodology. While I was a member of the 'jazz community', spoke English and was conversant with American culture by virtue of living in the Western capitalist world, I was nonetheless not American. While the majority of those musicians with whom I spent most of my time were not actually from Los Angeles and many were not from California, they shared with each other a significant degree of cultural similarity that would often elude me.[10] Furthermore, while I had privileged access to the jazz community by virtue of my experiences in

[9] This schizophrenia has been similarly documented in anthropology by Mascarenhas-Keyes who distinguished between her 'native' and 'professional' self (1987: 180).
[10] The tendency to meet up with friends for coffee instead of a pint was a trivial, yet common and affecting difference.

performing jazz, I was always held at arm's length when people were reminded of my status as an academic. Indeed my own awareness of my transient stay as a musician in the community would permeate each new encounter and it was difficult to establish the kind of enduring musical and emotional friendships I had enjoyed in the United Kingdom.[11]

Since my wife, Claire, had just been accepted into the University of California at Los Angeles' graduate ethnomusicology programme, it appeared to us to be an ideal opportunity for me to focus my research in Los Angeles, providing me with the opportunity I needed to concentrate my research in an 'other' place which was not specifically home, and where emotional and musical bonds did not totally put at risk my scholarly credentials. Jonathon Stock recognised this contemporary dilemma when he wrote that:

> It seems to me that there is a dilemma for us [ethnomusicologists]...[H]ow do we chart a course between the documentation and analysis of other people's values and the critical perspectives that we, as experts, might be able to bring to bear. This issue, I would suggest, is becoming ever more pressing as proportions of ethnomusicologists studying music of their own home communities increase, and as we look more and more at transnational musics that are as much 'ours' as anyone else's. (Stock 1999: www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/ethnomusicology.htm)

Epistemology versus ontology

Timothy Rice's work has been crucial in enabling me to envisage a different set of endeavours that could be associated with fieldwork (1997). In a similar sense to

[11] Indeed, my English accent, which I learned was considered by a portion of North Americans to be arrogant, often made my academic status even more evident and alienated me even further.

Marcia Herndon, who recognised that in our ethnographic endeavour 'there is no definitive truth; we can only aspire to see a bit more clearly' (1993: 78), Rice sought to relocate the focal point of our research away from a dependence on empirically grounded realities and a referential concept of truth. Rice observes that we can approach the field from two different perspectives; epistemological and ontological (Rice 1997). An epistemological perspective is concerned with methods, testing theories, knowing that particular aspects of culture operate in particular ways and testing the hypothesis that music and culture are related. An ontological perspective, on the other hand, emphasises 'being-there'.[12] The field becomes an 'experiential place' (Rice 1997: 105). Rather than testing hypotheses, such a perspective engenders a transformation of the self. By being there, by *experiencing in* the field rather than *knowing* the field, we *become* ethnomusicologists. Rice states that 'in effect, the self is transformed and reconfigured in the act of understanding one's own or another's culture' (1997: 105).

Rather than choosing between the two approaches, Rice, in the spirit of Paul Ricoeur, suggests that we attempt a mediation (1997: 105). In other words, Rice suggests that method, as the locus of explanation and understanding, should be replaced by the self since it is the self that undergoes transformations and affords new understandings. Instead of working within an irrevocable dualism, a fundamental incommensurability between subject and object, or insider and outsider, researcher and researched, is it not more fruitful and relevant to view insider and outsider selves as 'potentially interchangeable and as capable of change through time' (Rice 1997: 106)? Reaching an understanding involves a bracketing off of one's own self in order

[12] Martin Heidegger coins the term being-there (*Dasein*) to account for the ways in which our world precedes our consciousness (1962[1927]).

to grasp what the other person has to say. This grasping involves the fusion of horizons between us and them, the subject and the object, the insider and the outsider.[13] Once this fusion takes place, the assumed differences between the two are at least minimised and at best transcended. In their place, new relationships emerge unique to the particular time, place and configuration of selves.

Rice recalled his own experiences in the field and noticed the demarcation between the epistemological methods and questions associated with fieldwork and the ontological process of becoming a musician. As research develops, we can continue to move quite freely between, on the one hand, the activities of collecting, recording, transcribing, interviewing, and on the other, those of playing, experiencing and learning. Rice admits that many of his collections were for existential reasons: he wanted to develop his own repertoire and he cared for the musicians he was recording. Thus his fieldwork was largely based on ontological considerations rather than a concern for theory or method.

Throughout my ethnographic experience and research I have noticed a huge discrepancy between epistemological and ontological approaches. One of my overarching concerns was to find a way in which to chart a theoretical argument in between these perpetually stormy waters. Rice's model of a hermeneutical arc was useful in coming to terms with some of the inconsistencies I had experienced with my own relationship to the field, the music, the tradition, the discipline of ethnomusicology and the musicians I was 'studying'.

[13] 'Fusion of horizons' is a concept developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1994 [1960]).

To illustrate this arc Rice reflected on how he developed his bagpiping skills in a 'field' remote from his Bulgarian informants and observed that despite this 'apparent liability, as understood from the perspective of traditional fieldwork...[this process] imitates, in fact, one of the experiences of acquiring culture generally' (Rice 1997: 108). In other words, despite not being immersed in what is commonly understood as 'the field', the bounded spatial and temporal entity where culture manifests itself, Rice actually gained a more realistic understanding of what it meant to be part of that culture by being apart from them, at a distance. My own understandings of the jazz community underwent a constant process of configuration and refiguration as new explanations added to my previous understandings which in turn required new explanations and so on.

Pre-understandings: my first forays

I embarked on my official period of fieldwork with a good understanding of the jazz tradition, its musical vocabulary and its performance practice. From a young age I had attended a vast number of concerts ranging from jazz legends to local, 'undiscovered' performers and friends. My own performance experience had also been fairly extensive with some reasonably high profile engagements in Edinburgh, London and Cambridge, and countless jam sessions and less formal gigs. My entry into the field was not, therefore like many others who suffer a degree of alienation with regards to the musical culture they encounter. However, I still felt I had a lot to learn and was keen to appropriate more and understand better.

My initial entry into the field was rather inconspicuous. In fact, nobody really seemed to care that I was doing fieldwork, or that I wanted to discuss their

experiences, their own hermeneutical arcs within the world of improvisation.[14] Before I arrived in Los Angeles, I knew that the saxophonist and wind player Jeff Clayton was based there and that he was an active teacher. I later found out that the majority of saxophonists in the city had at one time or another passed through Clayton's world and his unique brand of pedagogy. Upon arriving in the city, I called him up in the hope that I could introduce myself, discuss the possibility of me interviewing him, and maybe take a few lessons. He patiently listened and liked the sound of my research, but was more concerned with when I could come with my horn and play for him.[15]

Clayton was the first person I had contacted regarding my research. After our conversation I was a little overwhelmed. I had to remind myself that I was here to work with regular musicians.[16] Initially I had the impression that he thought of me as a journalist and was somewhat suspicious of my questions. He seemed much more comfortable talking with me as a musician, eager to learn and to explore his world. I

[14] Cottrell notes that many ethnographers suffer negativity when conducting research among their own community (he cites Mascarenhas-Keyes' comments about her experiences among the Goan community of London to which she belonged), and reflects on his own experiences, as a professional-musician-in-London-turned-ethnomusicologist, as being positive: 'most musicians were interested in what I was doing, although I usually made no mention of it unless requesting time for an interview, presenting myself just as another working musician and without my hidden ethnomusicological agenda. Many of them seemed to enjoy undertaking the formal interviews, several even claiming that they had found it quite a cathartic experience' (Cottrell 2004: 18-19). My experience concurs to a degree: the most candid musicians, of whom are cited at length in later chapters, certainly found the discussions invigorating and had clearly thought about improvisation a lot. Others remained more aloof and challenged my questions and questioning in oftentimes abrasive ways. Following such occasions, I'd often slip back into my role as an audience member or fellow performer.

[15] Jeff Clayton's career has been varied and illustrious. He is best known through his brother, John Clayton, a bassist and bandleader of the very popular and acclaimed Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra (and more recently with Diana Krall), with whom Jeff plays a major role. While perhaps not a household name, Jeff Clayton's sound is ubiquitous and can be heard with the Count Basie band, Earth, Wind and Fire, Madonna, Barry Manilow, Quincy Jones, Nina Simone and many other such luminaries. Perhaps dubbed the 'musician's session musician', Jeff Clayton has extensive experience improvising in different contexts.

[16] My thesis originally was centred around amateur jazz musicians but, since the distinction between amateur and profession is cloudy and contestable, I soon developed different foci. Nevertheless, since extensive ethnographies have already covered the world of seasoned veterans (Berliner 1994; Monson 1996), I was more concerned with documenting the voices of a younger generation of jazz musicians who could reflect on their experiences in learning to improvise.

reminded myself, too, that I was not intending to come here to have lessons. Despite this, I considered that it was important to establish some relationships of this type as it would probably open up infinite worlds for my own playing capabilities, and in turn enable me greater access into the jazz scene.

Clayton allotted a time for me early on a Saturday morning in September 2002, and directed me over the phone to his studio, explaining that it was simply off Route 10, the Santa Monica Freeway, and on the intersection of Venice and La Brea. Having just arrived in Los Angeles and being still a little apprehensive about driving, let alone tackling the infamous freeway system, I looked on a map and deciphered a back route which would take me on adjacent 'surface' roads. Many hours later, flushed, short of breath, nervous, and still vacant from hesitantly weaving in and out of all the intersecting boulevards, failing to notice the incessant stop signs and receiving stern looks and honking horns from the short-tempered and car-obsessed Angelinos, I arrived in Clayton's studio, a very humble shed incongruously squashed in the parking lot of one of LA's ubiquitous strip malls dominated by Mexican fast food joints, strip clubs, and dime stores.

The intersection of La Brea and Venice definitely had a rough edge. The traffic was relentless and the street corners became the makeshift offices of recently arrived Mexicans, smuggled across the border, searching for an odd job to pick up. The palm fringed roads and manicured lawns of Westwood and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) where I had been residing exclusively until now seemed a world away. My heart sank a little. I had expected Clayton's 'studio' to be a glitzy Hollywood hang-out populated by young aspirants of the jazz world. Like so

many arriving in this city of angels and dreams, the tatty reality splinters such fantasies.

Inside the studio I was greeted by a larger than life character and a small boy struggling to play his first scale. Clayton's enthusiasm and patience was wearing thin and he welcomed me in. Two other men sat on a bench while setting up their saxophones and filing through CDs. Clayton had forgotten who I was and why I was here. He assumed it was for a lesson and told me to take a seat. It dawned on me that this was not going to be an interview, that his interest in my fieldwork was minimal, and that I was going to be hanging around for ages, waiting patiently to get my lesson. I sat around for a while watching this poor little kid struggling through a few more scales and attempting to play a melody he obviously had not practiced. Since it was Saturday, I concluded that 'Little League' baseball was the only thing on his mind.

Nevertheless, eventually things began to evolve. A few other guys came and went, we listened to each other play, bantered with Clayton, and sat around while another guy worked through his transcription of John Coltrane's *Pursuance*. Clayton was demonstrating how Coltrane did some of his false fingering and over-blowing techniques which are characteristic of his sound and subsequently adopted by any hip tenor saxophone player. Once he'd mastered this technique Clayton urged him to 'go down to the Stage and blow everyone's socks off'. Later I found out that Clayton was referring to 'World Stage Performance Space', a project developed by the late

drummer Billy Higgins,[17] which has become a breeding ground for young jazz ensembles, comprising some of my colleagues in the UCLA jazz programme, and now branded as the up and coming band *The Young Jazz Giants*. The venue for this project is located in Leimart Park, the most visible centre of African American heritage and culture in Los Angeles.[18]

During my first visit to Clayton's studio, it appeared that most of the guys who had come along were regulars at the World Stage which, among other things, nurtures African American pride and reflects the aspirations of a close community of all ages with a passion for jazz and its African American legacy. This obviously placed me, as a white European, as somewhat of an outsider. It was interesting, nonetheless, to observe the ways in which most of the aspiring players were interested in particular aspects of the jazz tradition. It was clear that these musicians were amateurs and this was recognised by both Clayton and the emerging community of musicians. Their predilection for jazz, it seemed to me, was solely geared towards the Thursday night jam sessions, gruelling and alienating affairs for outsiders, but a source of community pride for those united in the Leimart Park aesthetic.

[17] Higgins was a legend in L.A. A versatile veteran who has been associated with every jazz great and has been a pioneering influence during many of modern jazz's defining moments, especially with Ornette Coleman, and appeared on over 700 recordings, Higgins was a beloved son of the Los Angeles jazz scene. He was ubiquitous in educational programmes and had an altruistic spirit in nurturing young jazz talent. Higgins was awarded the Jazz Master's Fellowship in 1997 by the National Endowment for the Arts. The 'World Stage', as it is commonly known, was opened in the 1980s as a joint venture with Higgins and the poet Kamau Daaood. The performance enclave holds the famous Monday night drum workshops, a writer's workshop on Tuesday, a poet's workshop on Wednesday, a jam session on Thursday and a concert series on Friday and Saturday. Since its inception, the 50-seat auditorium has hosted workshops with some legends of the modern jazz scene such as Ron Carter, Kenny Barron and Barry Harris.

[18] The community, set in the South Central/Crenshaw district of the city, was one of the first 'planned communities' of the era and is packed with 'Afro' style clothes stores, galleries, dance studios and restaurants.

When I first arrived in the city and began perfunctory conversations with a few college-based jazz musicians, they all urged me to steer clear of Leimart Park and the World Stage. Pianist Dan Grieman warned me during a conversation at the University of Southern California (USC), 'they're just this bunch of old men heckling you and making you feel small' (07-10-02); others told me that 'they like you to play in a certain way', or 'its just the same guys getting up and not giving anyone else a chance'. These warnings, I felt, had justified my slight apprehension in venturing out into the World Stage. 'There are plenty of other, better places you can hear jazz', they told me. I did visit the World Stage on a number of occasions, played a couple of times, and it was not so bad. I cannot say that I was urged on by many of the regulars, but having been acquainted with some of the musicians at Clayton's Saturday sessions, I felt reasonably secure. However, it did not seem that appropriate to begin interviewing any of these musicians in depth. It occurred to me that since my research was not on aspects of race or African American identity, it was not wise to centre my fieldwork in such a racially charged scene. While race is a defining issue both in Los Angeles and the jazz community more broadly, the focus of my research is, to borrow a well worn cliché, 'colour-blind' and draws on a wide range of jazz musicians, male and female, and from different ethnic backgrounds, which I see to be reflective of the jazz community at large, in addition to the population of Southern California. Having informally broached the question of my research with a few of these musicians, I gained the impression that any formal interview I might conduct in this politically intoxicating arena would be steeped in discussions about race.

Despite this, what I did learn from my experiences at Clayton's was the ways in which the musicians at the World Stage are interested in particular aspects of the jazz tradition, aspects that are commonly associated with the Civil Rights Movement-inspired jazz improvisations of John Coltrane. This observation, in turn, confirmed to me the significance of style as a social marker within the musical community. Coltrane's huge influence at Clayton's sessions and in the subsequent World Stage events I attended is illustrative of this insight. His famous quartet recordings of the early 1960s with McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison provide the symbolic heritage through which these musicians interpret the tradition and develop their own set of self-understandings.

Coltrane's music, in other words, had social implications for this particular community beyond mere stylistic categories. My initial response to the oftentimes superficially generated capacity to reproduce certain features of Coltrane's style at the World Stage, led to my appropriation of the critical theory of Bourdieu and his notion of symbolic capital. From this perspective, a knowledge of Coltrane's style, however crude and spiritually or musically shallow, would endow the performer with symbolic capital within a community and enable him or her to transfer this capital into other modes of privilege. I began to understand that 'musical facts' are indeed social in nature; they reference particular ideas in a community, symbolise and signify identity and articulate a shared heritage.

However, as my own hermeneutical spiral gathered momentum, I began to realise that this is only one side of the story. Subsequent trips to New York, back to London, and a more varied exposure to the community in Los Angeles, opened me up

to a world that was not simply about articulating identities or manipulating social markers in a competitive arena, but which explored deeper aspects of musical worlds of meaning. Improvisation, I began to discover, articulates moods and time, and captures a sense of our being-in-the-world that cannot be reduced to issues of identity, exclusion or inclusion. Improvisation is a language which communicates aspects of our being-in-the-world that are not articulable through ordinary and everyday discourse, and my renewed task was to find the appropriate models with which to reflect this capacity.

Jazz in L.A.

These first forays into the field, however, presented a number of interesting challenges. Roger Sanjek acknowledged the difficulties inherent in bringing together disparate peoples in urban settings and noted that the ethnographer 'must select certain actors, activities, or locations as the anchor points of fieldwork' (Sanjek 1978: 257). The ethnographer, he argues, must scrutinise this selective process. Added to this lack of homogeneity inherent in the urban jazz community was my choice of city within which to conduct fieldwork: Los Angeles. This city sprawls over 1,220 square kilometres (470 square miles) and has a population of around 10 million. Negotiating the city is notoriously difficult and without a car, impossible. Similarly, getting to grips with the Los Angeles jazz scene was my first challenge.[19]

The jazz scene in Los Angeles is punctuated by the ethics and aesthetics of the major industry that dominates Southern Californian life: the entertainment industry. There has emerged somewhat of a pattern among jazz musicians based in Los

[19] By contrast, for a discussion of New York's relatively coherent and easily accessible jazz 'scene' see Jackson 1998.

Angeles that they will inevitably end up on a T.V. show, or composing and performing for a film score. The result is an unusual number of 'session musicians' who are ostensibly called upon for their ability to provide a satisfactory 'product'. In common with the Hollywood aesthetic, taste becomes fickle and little regard is held for traditions and canons since high importance is placed on the commercial appeal of a performer's sound.

Actually, I seldom encountered musicians of this type during my stay. Session musicians or commercial jazz performers were usually disdained by more conventional practitioners of jazz. Indeed, their proclivity towards a 'smooth' sound held very little attraction to me. However, as a consequence of this commercial industry aesthetic, jazz music is not performed as often as in other major cities such as New York, Chicago, New Orleans and the San Francisco Bay Area. In the relatively few clubs there were, audiences were kept to a minimum (even at the World Stage mentioned above). On more than one occasion I was the only one attending, or a show was cancelled due to a poor audience.

Fieldwork among the jazz musicians of Los Angeles

The notion of conducting fieldwork *among the jazz musicians of Los Angeles*, to evoke a number of defining ethnographic monographs (Evans-Pritchard 1937; Fortes 1945), will appear absurd to many for a number of reasons. First, jazz music is considered a highly individualistic pursuit. Jazz musicians were typically characterised as being aloof from society and the thought of herding them together under one study may appear too challenging. Second, another objection to such a field-based study is that jazz is too close to conventional Western forms of music and

is therefore too rooted in our own cultural self-representations. 'Surely jazz musicians are just like any Western musicians', detractors may object. 'Do they warrant the same ethnographic treatment as a tribe?'

For many, jazz is simply not exotic enough to licence ethnographic enquiry. Furthermore, if jazz really is, as many of its practitioners contend, 'a universal language', why is it necessary to designate a particular 'field' within which it can be understood? There was also some circumspection regarding the location of my chosen field. L.A. epitomises the post-industrial sprawling megalopolis. Its very image is vilified by all who search community, culture and integrity, and it represents the exact opposite of the type of communities traditionally represented by fieldwork.

Finally, the ultimate suspicion of my study warranting fieldwork status was my own intimate involvement with and experience in the community and tradition which I purportedly studied. How on earth could I lay claim to any scientific standards of objectivity and interpretive integrity if I am already part of the tradition? Fortunately, we are well past the age at which our standards of 'truth' are measured against those of the natural sciences, but there still appeared to be objections to my ethnomusicological rendering of the jazz community. People would ask, 'Are you looking at a particular community – for instance the Mexican or Korean jazz community in Los Angeles' or, 'Are you studying aspects of race', or 'Are you looking at the influence of African music on the jazz tradition?' Each time I would answer 'no', and simultaneously would feel more and more alienated from the discipline of ethnomusicology into which I had become enculturated.

My study is simply an inquiry into the ways in which improvisation becomes meaningful for people, how improvisation provides spaces for people to understand themselves and the community to which they belong. In spite of these misgivings, drawing on the methods of fieldwork, including extensive interviews, ethnographic observation, recording and participant observation, appeared to be the best method through which I could gain the clearest understanding of these issues.

Once I had fended off my detractors, how was it that my identity became so fractured during my fieldwork experience? With such a comfortable environment in which to situate my field, how could I have any problems? Indeed, many fellow fieldworkers, friends and family would envy me living in sunny California with its healthy and relaxed attitude, wide beaches and rooftop terraces. In fact I often laughed at myself while stuck in traffic on one of L.A.'s vast freeways, driving to another jazz club across town, thinking, 'Is this fieldwork? Is this my field?'.

During this time, in order to recapture and secure my identity as an ethnomusicologist, I maintained active participation in ethnomusicological debates, seminars and conferences at UCLA, by virtue of my status as Visiting Scholar. Perhaps a little unusually, my intellectual involvement *during* my designated fieldwork year equalled and perhaps exceeded that in other periods of my dissertation research. It is often the objective for fieldworkers in the field to remove themselves from the horizons of their academic community, their armchairs and fancy theories, in order to suspend their identities momentarily in an attempt to go native, to understand from the native's point of view. Was my absorption in multiple communities, the academic and the jazz, encumbering my understanding of the

community I was supposed to be studying? On reflection, I think this may have been the root of my identity crisis. I seemed to have lost myself. Exactly who was I supposed to be: academic, jazz musician or fieldworker?

The accepted role I was expected to play had escaped my grasp and I had no firm platform to stand on, no vantage point through which to focus my interpretations. This was compounded by the intensely alien world Los Angeles had become with its foreign rituals, customs and language. A world, however, which it was assumed was essentially my home since I was a white Anglo-Saxon, English speaking person.

Funnelling in

As with many other ethnographers before me, in spite of this identity crisis, I persevered. My fieldwork appears to have unfolded in a similar manner to what Michael Agar referred to as the fieldwork 'funnel' (1980). This metaphor was used in an attempt to describe fieldwork as beginning as a wide, all-encompassing absorption of available data and research material, then 'funnelling' into more focussed activities, informants and events.

Although I could argue that there are no temporal boundaries of my fieldwork per se, since I have been involved in the world of jazz for a number of years, my self conscious entry into the field was in September 2002, upon my arrival in Los Angeles after Claire and I picked up my parents-in-law's car in St. Louis, Missouri and made the epic trek, often via Route 66, 'out West'. Early on, I established where the jazz was to be found in that city. Publications such as *L.A. Weekly* and the *Los Angeles*

Times listed jazz events around Los Angeles County, enabling me to fathom the scene. My previous acquaintances with jazz scenes in other major cities such as New York, London and Paris had not prepared me for the Los Angeles scene. Consistent with the city's sprawl, the jazz clubs were situated miles apart from one another, often in unusual places. Some resembled diners while others were like living rooms. One informant described a leading jazz club that attracts international stars as like 'a gymnasium...it's so sterile in there'. Furthermore, Los Angeles' strict no-smoking policy, in addition to its propensity to shy away from the consumption of alcohol, stripped away popular sensory preconceptions of the 'jazz world'. Los Angeles' jazz scene is very wholesome, populated with very keen individuals who seem a world away from the glitz and glamour that permeates every other aspect of 'Tinsel Town'.

In the 1940s and 1950s Los Angeles enjoyed a similar status as New York City; at times it was dubbed the 'Jazz Capital of the World'. Central Avenue, which runs from Downtown Los Angeles to Watts, was a place that redefined history. This was the place where Kid Ory made the first ever recordings by a full band of African American musicians from New Orleans, the place that became the home of Duke Ellington, Art Tatum, Nat King Cole and Billie Holiday, the place that helped nurture bebop and gave birth to Dexter Gordon and Charles Mingus, the place that invented rhythm and blues.[20] Today, however, Central Avenue has disappeared and jazz musicians and their venues, like the population at large, have become dispersed around the city, constantly in search of a centre.

[20] For an excellent oral history of jazz in Los Angeles during this period see *Central Avenue Sounds* (Bryant et al. 1998).

The geographical layout of the city was one of the first challenges I faced, and our inherited car was essential, if at times weary from its marathon across the canyons, deserts and prairie lands of Midwestern and Western America. When it finally broke down for over two weeks, I was incapacitated and my fieldwork had to take a break. Attending concerts, arranging interviews, and sitting in on rehearsals, therefore, were not spontaneous activities but ones which had to be carefully planned. I took numerous trips out to the 'Valley', only to be disappointed by certain people I had expected who did not turn up or by an unexpected change of venue.[21] Nevertheless, once I had oriented myself around Los Angeles, I began to network, meet people, and become introduced to others. Often people appeared in front of me, while at other times I had to work hard to seek musicians out.

In other instances, I would have to go through more formal routes to access people. The University of Southern California has an excellent reputation for jazz and is the home of a renowned jazz studies department in addition to its Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz. The latter is a small prestigious institution that selects a handful of the world's most gifted young jazz talents and nurtures them under the guidance of some of jazz's greatest stars and educators. During my time spent in Los Angeles I sat in on classes with bass player Christian McBride, trumpeter Terence Blanchard and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. This network of musicians provided me with a central source of informants.

Following my observations of rehearsals and practice sessions, I would often go and have coffee with musicians and discuss who was in town or what new records

[21] The Valley is a shorthand expression for the San Fernando Valley within Los Angeles County that comprises the towns Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena. This was situated about one and a half hours from my home in Westwood and was an area with a few good jazz clubs.

were out. Sometimes I would conduct specific interviews while at other times I would just 'hang out'. Often I would be directed towards other musicians in Los Angeles, or told of people visiting town whom I should contact. On one such occasion I heard tenor saxophone player Mark Small running scales in a practice room and, upon learning that he was 'just visiting' from New York, I asked if I could discuss a few things with him about his playing. He felt that he did not have enough time right then, so he invited me out to New York where we would talk, see some shows, and meet other musicians. So my 'field' expanded to New York and my intense, two-week long visit absorbed me into the scene there. I met countless people, discussed ideas and went to shows. Many of the people I met then I continue to correspond with and exchange ideas via phone and email.

So, having cast my net over the Los Angeles jazz scene during my initial eight months, I became a familiar face within the city's jazz venues and at rehearsals. In addition to this source of informants and field for observation and analysis, my active participation in the UCLA jazz ensemble and combo enabled me to participate in jazz performances. Here, my primary role and presence was considered to be that of a performer and musician. I contributed solos and compositions to these groups who met two or three times weekly, and performed in UCLA's Schoenberg Hall as part of evening and noon concerts towards the end of each quarter. Eventually, our combo (under the direction of Kenny Burrell) also branched out further into other concert engagements in Southern California.

This fieldwork process involved a direct discussion of the musical materials at hand (a process common to rehearsal settings in most musical contexts), and led to

more indirect discussions about players' styles, recently released records, gigs attended and so on. In this context, any microphones or interview-style questions were inappropriate since we all considered each other equals, having the same intentions and objectives. However, I built up a number of impressions that have been documented and interpreted, and became particularly close to Nick Keller, a guitarist in my combo at UCLA with whom I regularly attended gigs and jam sessions about town.

Interruptions

With a number of responsibilities calling me back to the UK for short, weekend-long visits every three months or so, I was advised by customs in the UK that it was unnecessary to endure the bureaucratic and emotional rollercoaster of spouse visa applications especially in the wake of recent world events. Earlier that year, Claire had been offered a scholarship in the Ethnomusicology Department at UCLA to pursue her doctorate. Her residency in Los Angeles provided us with a firm base in which we could avoid separation while pursuing our academic careers. Fortunately, Claire's status as a dual citizen, by virtue of her American parents, relieved any issue of immigration status on her part, so we confidently established our home in L.A. and even adopted a dog. My regular trips back the UK to touch base, attend conferences and attend important family events, in addition to the fact that I was not working in the States, meant that I could travel back and forth under the visa waiver programme. Since our stay would not exceed one year, as I was required to resume residency at SOAS for my final year, this arrangement suited us well.

However, this fieldwork period was significantly broken up following two significant events. The first, in April 2003, saw me up against the US Customs and Border Protection booth, the Department of Homeland Security officer barking his mantra: 'What is the purpose of this visit?'. He ordered me to return 'home' immediately. My optimism of making a swift and easy return to the States and to my wife rode quite high for a while until I contacted the embassy and was instructed it would take two months to arrange a meeting necessary in order to apply for the correct visa.

Having cooled off somewhat, I resigned myself to my fate and decided that I would at least have a good opportunity to sit back, assess my work-in-progress and transcribe all my recordings and interviews. However, the second event that followed left an even more lasting effect on my research. Upon realising that I would not be returning to L.A. for a while, Claire dropped everything to search out all of my field notes, journals and minidisk player with a stack of disks on which all my interviews, concerts and jam sessions were recorded, waiting to be sorted, edited and transcribed. Everything she saw as mine that had been accrued over the past eight months would be packed up and reliably FedEx'd as soon as possible. The next morning, Claire received a call from the Fed Ex call centre informing her that the van had been broken into yards from my flat in London. Unfortunately, the thieves decided to take my package and I never saw its contents again.

As these events unfolded, I was forced to reassess my research and what I had learned so far from fieldwork before I began to piece together what I could recall. I began to realise that fieldwork was more than a mere collection of data, and to

understand that I had undergone a significant change, my horizons had been broadened and I encountered an enlarged sense of self through my encounter in the field in spite of a dearth of empirical data. This experience became the basis of my research.

From loss of data to a fusion of horizons

I felt that the very experience of my identity-fracturing illustrated to me that research involves a number of existential issues, whether they emerge from fear of the 'Other' or from the fear of retracting from what one already understands and cherishes: the self. Like improvisation, research involves risk. I certainly felt that I had endured the rite of passage that can bestow on me the title of 'ethnographer', and the irony of experiencing some of the classic problems endured by fieldworkers in more traditional ethnographic contexts, was not lost on me. Moreover, it became apparent to me that fieldwork is a culture in itself which belongs neither to the world of performance nor the world of academic enquiry; it is a world which has a language and tradition of its own. It is an ethnomusicologist's job to appropriate this world of fieldwork. This world is not one which stands at a distance from the observer. It is not a set of tools which can be picked up and put down at whim. It is a world in which we have to become absorbed; a world we have to *understand* rather than explain. This world can be appropriated by anyone wishing to understand from the vantage point of a fieldworker.

Fieldwork, I surmised, is an experience which endowed me with an understanding of the vicissitudes of life itself. Thus, I reflect on fieldwork not as the

systematic collection of data but rather as an experience in which our selfhood itself undergoes an exposure to something different, an 'Other' that is not alien but rather is a partner in conversation, and it is this conversation that drives research rather than the self-conscious motivations of the researcher.

While it is commonly understood that identifiable proof of empirical evidence is necessary to 'prove' a scientific argument, an *understanding* is the result of dialogue and what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer 1994 [1960]). For Gadamer, understanding is referred to as a fusion because this word captures the idea that individual horizons are brought together to occupy the same place, while still retaining their particular perspective. Understanding does not entail either the annihilation or assimilation of existing positions but rather their coming to inhabit a shared perspective. This shared meaning is something new that exceeds and transforms previous horizons without destroying them. Gadamer states that understanding 'always involves the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes not only our particularity, but also that of the other' (1994 [1960]: 271).

Despite the fact that I did manage to transcribe a series of interviews before I had my unfortunate incident, and despite the fact that I did return to Los Angeles several months later, meeting up with a number of my friends and informants again, many of my reflections emerged from a transformation of my own understanding of improvisation and jazz music which could not have surfaced solely via a detached empirical method. While my informant's voices are reprinted in this dissertation, in reality, what transpired from the time I spent in Los Angeles was open-ended, dynamic, emerging and negotiated. As such, losing a large portion of my field notes

and recordings did not signify the end of my field research, as it so very nearly could have.

Observing, participating and interviewing

My experiences in the 'field' were varied and diverse and were often directed through circumstance and serendipity rather than by design. UCLA provided a firm base in which I could orient my foraging into Southern California's jazz world. Early on I successfully passed auditions for UCLA's Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Combo, playing alto saxophone, which involved weekly rehearsals and concert dates under the direction of Llew Matthews and Kenny Burrell, respectively. Even practicing in UCLA's practice rooms turned out to be part of an active role in belonging to that community. Indeed, carrying my saxophone around in a shaped case was a powerful enough index of my membership in the jazz community. Ironically, my role was reversed as I became the subject of one graduate researcher's fieldwork on non African American jazz musicians in Los Angeles!

While Burnim's observation that her presence at the churches she was studying was usually disguised as 'that of a visitor' (1985: 436) rang true for me, there were many occasions where my disguise was lifted. When attending jam sessions, concerts or rehearsals, my identity as a visitor or onlooker rarely lasted long. More often than not, somebody would sit with me and ask me about myself, or somebody I had previously met and interviewed or discussed ideas with would introduce me by saying: 'he's doing research on jazz in Los Angeles'. Obviously this both blew my cover as the 'participant observer' and often led to a false construction of subject and object in which I, the outside observer, was told things by the insider

subject, or 'informant', and the relationship became a hierarchical one rather than one between musical colleagues. Bourdieu (1977) noted that such practices lead to false claims.[22]

Nevertheless, I attempted to gain as much of an insider perspective as possible, and often the simple act of playing music with others rewarded me with infinitely more than that of conducting a formal interview. Having said that, I chose to interview in more depth a number of the musicians with whom I had become closest during my period of research. They were also musicians who had time for me, who would invite me to their apartments to hang out, who would suggest going together to gigs and concerts, and who respected me both as a musician and a researcher. These bonds were the success of my fieldwork experience and I still recall the sense of excitement I would enjoy as I anticipated a new meet up and a wealth of new insights. Those friends whom I cite most regularly and at most length are Isaac Darche, Nick Keller, Jason Goldman, Mark Small, John Ritchie and Dan Grieman. I also benefited from playing with and hanging out with John Starks, Cheyenne Henderson, Tom Altura, Joe Petrasek, Ian Vo, Kamasi Washington, Hitomi Oba, Ben Adamson, Michael Sheridan, Darnell Jones, Eliot Deutsch, Grant Peters, Michael Moreno and others who, by virtue of being in the same performance space, or next-door in a practice room, or at a rehearsal, inevitably fuelled me with insights into their art and gave me the go-ahead to cite some of their particular words of wisdom.

[22] However, the vexing ethical dilemma fieldworkers often face when wanting to record a performance, was turned on its head in my research. On arriving at my first jam session, I initially attempted to make my new recording equipment as inconspicuous as possible, but then spotted a table at the front of the performance space cluttered up with everybody's minidisk recorders capturing their own playing and the playing of their peers.

I regard the opinions and ideas of these musicians as complementary to my own ideas as they developed throughout my fieldwork. As I have already mentioned, my fieldwork period was a journey rather than a laboratory. My thoughts have been shaped and guided by encountering musicians whose experiences of being engaged in the cultural tradition of jazz resounded with my own. Through theoretical reflection I hope to both provide an intellectual context for some of the assertions made by my fellow musicians and to construct a model that can in some way contribute to our understandings of the cultural imagination, aesthetics and tradition more generally.

The interview excerpts I have selected are credited[23] according to date and place; some interviews were recorded on minidisk, others scrawled in shorthand, and a number were kept in my memory and written up on the bus or car on the way home.[24] Inevitably, editing has constructed a particular narrative which in turn has placed my voice as the final arbiter. While I am slightly uncomfortable with this authority, especially in light of the reflexive turn in ethnomusicology, I deemed extensive theorising as the only means through which I could answer the questions that fuelled my research.

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[23] The one area in which I was asked to maintain anonymity for my subject was through my transcription in chapter 4. As I explain later, musicians' performances are highly sensitive areas, especially in light of the majority of the musicians' ages and non-professional status, and should not render academic scrutiny. While I do believe that more recordings and transcriptions would enhance the arguments made in this dissertation, I feel that it may represent a betrayal of a community in which I became absorbed and indebted to. One possible way out of this ethical dilemma would have been to find and focus on one or two consenting individuals or ensembles and credit their participation as a central contribution to the dissertation (see Stock 1996; Sorrell and Narayan 1980; Sanyal and Widdess 2004; Monson 1996). In turn, they would help to edit, structure, and reflect on my own theorising. Due to practical considerations, the particular status and politics of the musicians with whom I was working and my own contingencies, this could not be fulfilled.

[24] A number of general observations remain unaccredited by direct quotations and, in the event of my lost field notes and interviews, I met up again with the same musicians where possible, and repeated the interviews. Of course, both my questions and their answers had changed considerably. In many senses, the multidimensional approach I adopt in this dissertation is reflective of the constantly fluctuating, and often unpredictable nature of my time in Los Angeles.

Needless to say, my own experiences as a jazz musician permeate this text and I am fortunate enough to have shared all of the experiences attested to by my informants. Thus, I do feel that my own voice is central to the ethnographic horizons I work in and my theorising was not that of an aloof, abstruse disposition but through a genuine concern to confront the ways in which I relate to both the jazz tradition and the community of musicians who perform and listen to jazz.

The questions I addressed to my friends and colleagues were varied and dependent on the context of the interview and the person I was interviewing. Most of the time I improvised my interviews with the help of a few ideas jotted on my notepad, outlining my own mental map. I vacillated between specific questions such as 'how do you transcribe?' to more general questions concerning the nature of creativity, or individual identity. Often my research questions evolved with the unfolding conversation, in which case any planned sets of questions were abandoned and I had to extemporise. This experience was often as frustrating as it was rewarding.

Furthermore, I encountered many people who had research interests, whether academic or personal, of their own. For instance, one trumpet player directed the conversation to Peruvian jazz and actually urged me to change the focus of my study. On many occasions people wanted to talk about free jazz, which does not directly hold significant interest for me and was not a focus of my research, or with pedagogy and the nature of jazz in schools and issues of education. Others attempted their own psychological interpretations of jazz, and out of respect to them I often felt it

appropriate to steer the conversation into their field of interest. One saxophone player could only relate jazz in terms of sex and money. My ideas about culture, poetics, creativity and understanding often became futile and redundant within these conversations.

Throughout my fieldwork I shared Timothy Rice's concern with the 'dialectical relationship between the individual and the world or culture where actions and symbols have meanings that are socially and historically constructed and maintained' (1994: 9). My study, like his, seeks to 'follow the history of [individual's] interaction[s] with the world into which they were thrown' (Rice 1994: 8).

CHAPTER TWO

Studies of Improvisation

Introduction

There have been a number of different approaches to the study of musical improvisation. A point at which they converge, though, is an acceptance of its transient and almost unclassifiable nature. Due to this, a number of metaphors and explanatory concepts have been deployed in order to come to grips with this global and ancient phenomenon. In this chapter, I select a number of different ways in which musicologists have wrestled with the elusive nature of improvisation and sought to provide an adequate and theoretically thorough basis upon which we base our understandings.

Real-time composition

With regards to a study of improvisation, Jeff Pressing insisted that any theory must explain three things: how people improvise, how people learn improvisational skill, and the origin of novel behaviour (1988: 152). While the first two elements require simple empirical investigation and description, accounting for the origin of novel behaviour demands a different set of considerations that encompass a range of philosophical, musicological, sociological and aesthetic presuppositions. Inevitably, discussions of improvisation draw attention to composition as the point of departure or confluence in establishing the extent to which it engenders novel behaviour.

Berliner describes jazz improvisation as:

> ...reworking precomposed material and design in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped, and transformed under the special conditions of

> performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation. (Berliner 1994: 241)

In light of this description, an account of improvisation as real-time composition may appear apt. Arnold Schoenberg suggests that 'composing is a slowed-down improvisation; often one cannot write fast enough to keep up with the stream of ideas' (1951: 435). However, this description risks limiting our understanding of improvisation's inherent instability. Pressing notes that in improvisation, mistakes have to be lived with since there is no going back. Improvisers do not enjoy the retrospective ability to edit or delete since errors 'must be accepted as part of the irrevocable chain of acoustical events, and contextually justified after the fact by reinforcement or development...If erasing, painting over, or non-realtime editing exist, improvisation does not' (Pressing 1984: 350).

However, improvisation's relationship to composition is somewhat more complex. Laudan Nooshin, in an article that explores the notion of improvisation as composition's 'Other', recognises that this distinction is generated discursively (2003: 242). She argues that discursive power relations instilled in networks of knowledge that separate composition from improvisation undermine improvisatory practices. In short, this power/knowledge nexus, recognised by Foucault (1977) as central to Western classificatory systems, has characterised composition as 'art' music and improvisation as its corollary – a primitive and embryonic craft. Improvisation, Nooshin illustrates, 'became a euphemism for referring to the opposite – the other – of "real" art: that is, composition' (2003: 246). Improvisation's portrayed inferiority derives from its spontaneous and non-written nature; its failure

to yield a score renders it seemingly unprepared, unfinished, without guidance, ephemeral and irrational.[25]

The structural aspects of improvisation

As a redress to this Orientalist and degrading conceptualisation of improvisation, musicologists and ethnomusicologists have overwhelmingly paid most attention to the structural aspects of improvisation. As trumpet player, Wynton Marsalis remarked: '[improvisation] is not just, "Well, man, this is what I feel like playing". It's a very structured thing that comes down from a tradition and requires a lot of thought and study' (Marsalis as cited in Berliner 1994: 63). It is interesting to note, however, that some authors refer to the 'enabling' features of such structures while others refer to them as 'constraining'. As a result, Pressing's third aspect of improvisation, the origin of novel behaviour, can only be explained, it appears, according to the pre-composed and structural elements deposited and sedimented in a tradition, and their point of departure.

The notion that improvisers prepare for the unexpected is commonplace. For instance, in the music of parts of the Arab world the *maqam* serves this particular purpose. In short, the *maqam* is a set of notes, whose relationships with each other are determined by tradition and convention, which became the basis for habitual patterns and the template for melodic development. These typologies are drawn on in the course of improvised performances. Similarly, in Iranian music the *radif* can be described as a repertoire or repository of melodies and forms which provides motives

[25] I recall recently listening to an interview with a famous soprano, Renée Fleming, in which her answer to the question, 'What are your hobbies, what do you like to do in your spare time', was, 'I like to sing jazz' (BBC Radio 3: 24-08-04).

and melodies, rhythmic patterns and dynamic orientations that provide the building blocks for improvised performances. Correspondingly, in the classical traditions of South Asian music, *rāgas* perform a similar function in providing, among other things, an outline of the ascent and descent of the mode and a number of characteristic phrases or motifs that guide melodic development and maintain a *rāga*'s special character in improvised performances.

In fact, such is the prevalence of structural attributes to improvisatory practices that many musical traditions are reluctant to adopt our Western classificatory term 'improvisation' to describe them.[26] Nevertheless, for heuristic purposes it is useful to draw parallels between this fixed-free dialectic among different improvisatory traditions in order to gain a clearer understanding of the ways in which musicians depart from models in new and imaginative ways.

The idea that musicians undergo intense periods of preparation upon embarking on a career in improvisation is shared across musical traditions. Paul Berliner reprimands what he refers to as 'the popular conception of improvisation as "performance without previous preparation"' as fundamentally misleading. He writes that 'there is, in fact, a lifetime of preparation and knowledge behind every idea that an improviser performs' (Berliner 1994: 17). Studies over recent years have a

[26]For example, in Sorrell and Narayan (1980), Sorrell's guru, co-author and main informant, the Hindustani musician Ram Narayan, rejected the term improvisation since this would pay little respect to the discipline and reverence of tradition he had endured. Sorrell had to conclude that in Hindustani music, 'What improvisation there is takes place within the narrow limitations of a strict discipline . . . the narrower the limits the sharper the focus, and the really good musician is one who can find the greatest freedom within the narrowest limits' (Sorrell and Narayan 1980: 2). According to Narayan, to use the term improvisation for his own musical practice would be a term of abuse, since for him improvisation disregards tradition and is tantamount to such improprieties as 'putting alcohol or butter in tea' (1980: 113).

common interest in falsifying the notion that improvisation is capricious extemporisation, by revealing the rules, grammars and storehouses of compositional devices that represent the culmination of many years of rigorous preparation. Two particular disciplinary foci I shall outline in this chapter for the purposes of the present study derive from ethnomusicology and linguistics. The question that must be kept in mind is this: in what ways do these approaches account for the origin of novel behaviour?

Studies of improvisation: ethnomusicology

Perhaps the first clear attempt to reveal the congruencies and convergences between improvisation across cultures, and between improvisation and composition more generally, appeared in Bruno Nettl's 1974 article published in *Musical Quarterly*. The article, entitled 'Thoughts on Improvisation', brought scholarly attention to the ubiquitous, but understudied and undervalued, process of improvisation. His cross-cultural analysis sought to explore the ways in which different cultures shape and regulate the forms of their individual improvisations. Nettl returned to this idea in the late 1990s and co-edited a volume discussing further his main thesis that improvisation and composition are similar creative processes (Nettl and Russell 1998). They differ, he argues, in that the time allowed for decision-making is more rapid in the case of improvisation. Moving beyond simplistic dichotomies of composition and improvisation, he suggests a continuum of slow composition : rapid composition with adjectives such as deliberate at one extreme and spontaneous at the other. In reality, he demonstrates, musical practices are situated *within* this continuum rather than at the extremes (Nettl 1974, 1998).

In his 1974 article, Nettl argues that improvisation and composition are simply different manifestations of a similar process. He cites major composers in the Western canon such as Franz Schubert, as working within a broadly defined model of improvisation rather than what is commonly thought of as the constant reworking and editing processes involved in composition: '[that] Schubert wrote down certain of his works rapidly . . . without working and reworking them very much, could lead us to regard his musical thinking as basically improvisatory' (Nettl 1974: 10-11). In terms of the present discussion of jazz improvisation, it is interesting to note that at the other end of the spectrum the critic and composer Gunther Schuller analysed the motivic development in tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' solo in his 'Blue Seven' to reveal a style of improvisation that was essentially compositional in nature (Schuller 1958).

These ideas have pervaded recent scholarship. Berliner stresses that rather than considering them as separate, composition and improvisation are part of an 'eternal cycle' in which seemingly heterogeneous elements are synthesised into a more productive whole which suitably characterises the creative processes that underlie *all* musical production. The constant back and forth oscillation between precomposed elements and ideas composed in the moment reminds us that a process of 'generation, application, and renewal occurs at every level of music making' (Berliner 1994: 495).

Identifying points of departure

Nettl's cross-cultural comparative approach sought to locate what he referred to as 'points of departure':

> [I]mprovisers always have a point of departure, something they use to improvise upon. There are many types, extending from themes, tunes, and chord sequences to forms, from a vocabulary of techniques to a vocabulary of motifs and longer materials, from what is easy or 'natural' for the hand to what is intellectually complex. (Nettl 1974: 16)

Points of departure have provided the main focus for the majority of ethnomusicological analyses on improvisation. For instance, in the context of Ghana, Chernoff explores the organising principles inherent in improvisation and notes that: 'those who have pressed us to recognize the achievements of extemporaneous improvisation have often underemphasized the importance of organization to the critical aesthetic sense' (Chernoff 1979: 122). He states that:

> Improvisation for the master drummer...lies not so much in the genesis of new rhythms as in the organization and form given to the already existing rhythms, and a musician's style of organizing his playing will indicate the way he approaches from his own mind the responsibility of his role toward making the occasion a success. (Chernoff 1979: 82)

Chernoff recognises that apparently spontaneous and improvisatory music is in actual fact performed within a set of established codes related to both the aesthetics of performance and to social considerations. These codes, then, are more than just guidelines or points of departure; they are repositories of taste, and indicators of social engagement.

Within the discipline of ethnomusicology there have been numerous studies of improvisation in the music of North Africa and the Middle East including Nettl (1972, 1973), Markoff (1990), Touma (1971), and Nooshin (1998). These illustrate how the art of improvisation is not about mystification but about learned skill. Similarly, in the classical Karnatak traditions of South India, Viswanathan and Cormack emphasise the importance of *rāga* as 'a broad system of rules [that] has been absorbed and used like a blueprint for moulding the edifice of each improvisatory form. The ability to be conversant and creative with *rāga*, then, is ultimately what defines the Karnatak musician's art' (Viswanathan and Cormack 1998: 231).

Studies of improvisation: improvisation and oral formulae

To illustrate the ways in which pre-composed elements are used in the course of performance to generate novel behaviour, many writings have drawn on Parry and Lord's ideas on improvisation in oral traditions (Parry 1971; Lord 1960). Their oral-formulaic theory, developed in order to study the ways in which Slavic epic songs generate new ideas, recognises a store of formulae and themes, and a technique of composition central to oral creativity. The basis of this formulaic approach has its roots in the retelling of Homeric epics. Formulas are groups of words regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea. By choosing from a repertoire of given formulae of different lengths and expanding or deleting sub-themes according to the needs of the performance situation, the experienced performer is able to formulaically improvise a new version of a known epic song. Furthermore, these formulae enable musician-poets to maintain an integral

performance through formulaic keys or cues which circumvent the need to memorise the epics in their entirety.

Gregory Smith draws explicitly on this theory in his analysis of a Bill Evan's jazz piano solo (Smith 1983). Similarly, Thomas Owens and Barry Kernfeld explore the formulaic nature of improvisations by alto saxophonist Charlie Parker and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, respectively (Owens 1974; Kernfeld 1981, 1983; and see also Schuller 1958, 1968, 1989; and Porter 1985). However, while these analytical models have become useful for both musicians and scholars in identifying protocols and points of departure, Robert Walser regards them as an:

> ...excellent means for legitimating jazz in the academy. But they are clearly inadequate to the task of helping us to understand jazz, and to account for its power to effect many people deeply – issues that ought to be central for critical scholarship of jazz. They offer only a kind of mystified, ahistorical, text-based legitimacy... (Walser 1995: 179)

Studies of improvisation: psychology and cognitive science

It is worth briefly considering one way in which psychology and cognitive science have addressed the nature of these building blocks within the origin of novel behaviour. The most important work on improvisation based on psychology has come from Jeff Pressing (1984, 1988, 1998). He explores models in generating improvisation and discusses motor memory and processes by concentrating on the individual's note-by-note construction of a creative improvisation. His work has also been echoed by Sloboda (1985) and Johnson-Laird (1988) who expound the idea that the limited speed of cognitive processing leads to a development of practices that

minimise the cognitive workload. Individual performance styles and genres thus seek to constrain the performer so as to reduce the demands on real-time creativity. Pressing comments that 'to achieve maximal fluency and coherence, improvisers, when they are not performing free (or "absolute") improvisation, use a referent, a set of cognitive, perceptual, or emotional structures (constraints) that guide and aid in the production of musical materials' (Pressing 1998: 52).[27]

Studies of improvisation: improvisation as ritual aesthetic

So, while scholars have made a number of cursory steps towards reducing the dualism between composition and improvisation – a dualism undergirded by Orientalist representations of improvisation as the untutored 'Other' – it appears that a number of steps are still required in order to enable us to understand the ways in which improvisation affects people deeply. Remaining within the ethnomusicological tradition, but dealing specifically with jazz improvisation, Travis Jackson's doctoral dissertation (1998) pays attention to the ritual nature of jazz improvisation in the New York jazz scene.

Drawing on a number of interviews and fieldwork observations, he explores the 'blues aesthetic' that determines jazz improvisation and argues, drawing on Feld (1994: 131-132), that this operates as a certain 'iconicity of style' that homologises across different cultural modes. The blues aesthetic, he argues, is metaphorically linked to other realms of experience in African American cultural and social life in

[27] It must be noted that psychology and cognitive science represent perhaps the most prolific and focused research into current improvisation studies. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of the present study to consider these contributions in any more depth. Since I am primarily concerned with cultural questions rather than cognitive ones, I believe that my approach would ultimately complement rather than contradict a cognitive-based study.

addition to music (Jackson 1998: 119). By exploring it as a ritual context, Jackson argues that we can observe the ways in which performances are constrained by the structure of the scene via the blues aesthetic 'at once making possible the interpretation of meaning while constraining its possible forms...[I]n addition to its function as entertainment, jazz can have expressive and transformative potential' (Jackson 1998: 137). As a ritual, the jazz performance can lead to a kind of spiritual transcendence. In order to describe this process, Jackson draws on the ideas of Czikszentmihalyi and his notion of 'flow' (1988) as a state of deep involvement akin to trance or possession.

Jackson's approach shares some ideas with the ethnomusicological writings of Jihad Racy (1991, 1998) and Gilbert Rouget (1985), both of whom explored notions of ecstasy in musical performances. Racy explores, in particular, the way in which the audience assists in the creation of improvised music, emotion and meaning in the Middle Eastern *tarab* context which, he illustrates, can be linked to traditional Sufi concepts of listening that presents music as a transcendent and visceral experience (1991: 99). The ability to achieve ecstasy is a prerequisite for effective performance.

The marginalisation of improvisation

Taken together, ethnomusicological studies have provided contributions that enable the art of improvisation to climb out of its marginalised position. Improvisation has been misunderstood largely as a result of binary, dualistic thinking that has characterised Western thought since the Enlightenment. René Descartes' famous proclamation, 'I think therefore I am [*cogito ergo sum*]', privileged thought over action (1980 [1637]). As a result, systems of notation and written scores, although

initially developed in order to maintain musical communities and preserve musical traditions, dominated art music by virtue of their intellectual, rather than mere physical, mode of engagement. The emotional and physical involvement with performances themselves has always been marginalised within the Western canon in favour of the *works* themselves in their abstract, intellectual totality. Since improvisation is associated with performance rather than composition, its scholarly credibility and intellectual rigours have been left largely neglected.

Improvisation enjoyed a moment of integrity in the Romantic era, especially in light of Kant's third critique in which he extolled the virtues of the imagination (1969 [1790]). Central to Kant's idea of the imagination was spontaneity. Our ability to synthesise experiences through the rapid process of the imagination becomes the bedrock of our knowledge. Since our experiences are, by nature, unpredictable, our imagination is, by nature, spontaneous. Furthermore, for Kant, aesthetic pleasure is a result of the free play of our acts of judgement guided by our spontaneous imagination. However, as a basis for a modern musicological account of improvisation, the whimsical, capricious and vague connotations of Romanticism in general, and Kantian aesthetics in particular, appear to be unsuitable.

The irrevocable dualism

While it appears that we have finally succeeded in interrogating the dualistic materialist/idealist, mind/body dualisms in our contemporary accounts of improvisation, by understanding the 'eternal cycle' between composition and improvisation, free and fixed, there is a latent danger that the current perspective will once again refract into a dualism. On the one hand there are what we could describe

as materialist approaches which explore the structural and organisational aspects of improvisation, while on the other hand are the experiential or idealist models which focus on the subjectivities of the performer and their transcendental state. Again, one approach appears to be indebted to Descartes' fundamentally empirical approach which seeks reason, while the other explores the idealist and seemingly capricious and intangible Romantic nature of transcendence and genius. On the one hand we are presented with a litany of formulaic and structural resources geared towards the acquisition of a vocabulary institutionalised in pedagogical discourse, and on the other we have the view typified by Louis Armstrong who, upon being asked to define jazz, is believed to have replied: 'Man, if you gotta ask you'll never know'.

Before interrogating this latent dualism at more length, I shall consider another of the approaches that have dominated recent studies of improvisation, namely linguistics and semiotics, and shall explore the ways in which they respond to Pressing's third demand: the origin of novel behaviour. I then will consider whether or not they have provided us with the conceptual tools with which to overcome the dualistic impasse.

Studies of improvisation: linguistics/semiotics

The idea that improvisation is like a conversation, and that the building blocks operate in the same ways as language, has gained a great deal of currency in recent years. Arguably the two most important scholarly works on jazz improvisation, Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz* (1994) and Monson's *Saying Something* (1996), which base their works on selections of detailed interviews with some of jazz's most famous practitioners, draw attention to their informants' pervasive metaphorical usage of the

idea of language and conversation. Berliner's own version of Nettl's idea of 'points of departure', which enable certain performance styles, is based on the analogy of 'vocabulary'. He highlights the discrete patterns that musicians store in the repertories which are referred to as:

> ...vocabulary, ideas, licks, tricks, pet patterns, crips, clichés, and, in the most functional language, things you can do. As a basic musical utterance, a thing you can do commonly involves a one-measure to four-measure phrase. (Berliner 1994: 102)

As I shall illustrate later, many of these patterns are idiomatic to jazz and are shared throughout the community, while others are more idiosyncratic to a player's stylistic identity. These patterns are passed on through generations largely as a result of students' meticulous transcriptions and analyses of famous recordings. Derek Bailey (1992) similarly acknowledges the analogy with language used by improvising musicians. He notes that it is useful to 'illustrate the building up of a common pool of material – a vocabulary – which takes place when a group of musicians improvise together regularly' (Bailey 1992: 96-97).[28]

This common language of jazz is remarkably durable. Berliner spends a large portion of his book exploring how it is transmitted and then incorporated into a player's own sound and individual identity while still remaining true to the tradition. Once established, the player is free to converse with his or her fellow band members.

[28] However, elsewhere, Bailey insists that 'any attempt to describe improvisation must be...a misrepresentation, for there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation' (1992: ix). It seems that Bailey presupposes the latent dualism without providing any attempt to overcome it.

When drummer Max Roach described this process to Berliner, he illustrated how each phrase determines what the next is going to be, like a conversation: 'It's like language: you're talking, you're speaking, you're responding to yourself. When I play, it's like having a conversation with myself' (Roach as cited in Berliner 1994: 192).

Berliner discusses at length and painstaking detail the learning process and acquisition of the soloist's skill (1994: 63-285). He then unravels and dissects the improvisatory process. The conceptual awakenings of aspiring performers are documented, and a glimpse of the process of building a harmonic and rhythmic language, vocabulary, grammar and dialect is given. He documents the ways in which a performer learns inexhaustible stocks of scales, how they develop technical control and how they undergo a methodological exploration of the rich history of jazz. He portrays the necessity to learn particular types of phrasing, tone, articulation, harmonic devices, scalar patterns, modal awareness, interval patterns, rhythmic patterns, ideas of space and vocabulary from jazz history so as to speak the language of jazz, and illustrates that the potency of phrases, and their dramatic, compositional and aesthetic qualities, are learned in this way.

Ingrid Monson (1996) draws on Steven Feld's insights into music and language by exploring the metaphors that link them which in turn relate to issues of cultural identity. The way we talk about music, through metaphors, mediates between speech and music; metaphors recur in semantic fields from contrasting cultural domains (Feld 1981: 22-23; Monson 1996: 75). Monson identifies linguistic metaphors, especially improvisation as conversation, and good improvisation as

talking or 'saying something', and relates these to issues of music as a cultural discourse: 'close analysis of the music and cultural analysis of improvisation has been part of the construction of meaning, identity, and critique in twentieth-century African American and American society' (Monson 1996: 74). Her ethnotheory is that the 'groove' and 'feeling' central to jazz is a vernacular code which is structurally linked to signifying practices in verbal communication that are particular to African American culture.

Similarly, Berliner draws attention to the ideal temporal state of the 'groove' which '[i]ncorporates the connotations of stability, intensity, and swing' (Berliner 1994: 349). He remarks that the 'groove' serves as a catalyst for a performer's power of expression and imagination. Fundamentally, the 'groove' is a social phenomenon in which playing together, and demonstrating receptiveness to each other, enables a performance to transcend the sum of its parts into a communal, even spiritual, activity.

Moving from the musical realm to the cultural, in her attempt to understand what a performance is representing or *signifyin(g)*, Monson terms this feature, again following Feld, an 'iconicity of style': the link between music in the moment of performance and the cumulative construction of cultural feeling and tone over time (Monson 1996: 77). In addition to this, signifying tropes such as irony, transformation and humour are performed to represent a cultural literacy that articulates wider cultural issues. Drawing on the work of influential African American literary theorists Henry Louis Gates (1988) and W.E.B. DuBois (1969), she explores the dialogic nature of jazz improvisation: communication and meaning

reside on the boundaries of consciousness between two people who use words that are both socially originated and infused with past and future voices.

It is through this particular understanding of discourse that Monson contributes her own understanding of what improvised jazz performances represent or express. Drawing on Gates (1988), she explores the pervasive theme of parody (repetition with a difference) in African American aesthetics as the 'figurative mode of expression that marks the "two discursive universes" of black and white' (Monson 1996: 104). The transformation of the improvisatory language-uses of the 'white' discursive universe (her example is Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'My Favourite Things' (1959)) into the expressive modes of the 'black' discursive universe (she then analyses Coltrane's famous reworkings of 'My Favourite Things'), underlies Gates' notion of repetition with a signal difference (Monson 1996: 106-121). The African American ethos of communication is through signifying 'formal verbal games and statements in which two-sided or multiple meanings are embedded' (Monson 1996: 87). Monson asserts that jazz music is firmly rooted within the social communication processes of African Americans.

The transformation of a 'corny tune' ('My Favourite Things') into a vehicle for serious jazz improvisation represents a cultural irony which in turn manifests itself as the expression of cultural identity and one of the salient features of African American musical aesthetics. Furthermore, this ironic reversal upstages the European American hegemonic aesthetic. In addition to this, 'there is an articulation of an independent improvisational aesthetic that draws on African American cultural sensibilities and is the taken-for-granted standard against which non African

American music is evaluated' (Monson 1996: 120). The jazz musician's assertion of irony in musical utterances is therefore cultural and ideological.

Monson develops a sophisticated metapragmatic theory of improvised music by attempting to identify the indexical capacities of music and its function as a cultural discourse. This work significantly attempts to break from a formalist aesthetic since it seeks to identify meaning within the cultural realm: music represents culture. However, as my argument develops, I shall illustrate that it is only when the signified is lost that the full cultural and poetic effects of improvisation to recompose our experience and affect our being can take place. In other words, rather than asserting that improvisation refers to something that already exists – a suggestion which would ultimately render music redundant – should we not rather assume that improvised music gains its cultural efficacy from its ability to unfold new meanings?

Another important contribution to improvisation studies can be found in the work of Keith Sawyer who explores improvisation in relation to music, drama and other forms of social activity. Sawyer explores the idea of interaction and conversation in improvisation by paying attention to Peircian semiotics and G.H. Mead's idea of the *emergent* (Sawyer 1996). He focuses in on the expectations of a performer to contribute something original to an emerging performance and identifies this in terms of *indexical entailment* (Sawyer 1996: 279).

Sawyer describes indexical entailments as the key to successful jazz conversations. They basically refer to the process by which the performer contributes something new to the flow of interaction. Again, alluding to Nettl's 'points of

departure', Sawyer sees the performance context as providing constraints rather than enablers; each performer is constrained by the emergent – the indexical presuppositions which include such structural features as key, tempo and harmonic structure, in addition to the ideas projected by the other performers. He writes that 'in the presence of these constraints, jazz *requires* each performer to offer something new at each point, ideally something which is suggestive to the other performers' (Sawyer 1996: 292, emphasis original).

For an adequate analysis of the semiotics of improvisation, Sawyer urges us to move away from the semantics and syntax of musical signs, which characterised the approach influenced by Parry and Lord, and explore the pragmatics of indexicality. This shift, it seems, begins to probe in a more convincing manner into the origin of novel behaviour in improvisatory practice. By developing a more interactional semiotic-based analysis, Sawyer contends that we can explore the indexical properties of sign usage rather than a 'structural analysis focused on sense, segmentation, paradigmatic equivalence sets, or static notational systems' (1996: 300). By focussing on the emergent, we can understand the ways in which a performance is structured yet transient, always open to change, emerging from and dependent on collective interaction. As an intersubjective, communal activity, its shape is determined neither by a single performer nor by the regularities of style.

The presence of fixed structures in an improvised performance are the result of what anthropologist Stanley Tambiah referred to as the process of 'ossification' – the ways in which ritual forms progressively lose semantic content and become 'a meaningless formal structure' (Sawyer 1996: 281); the indexical entailments that

Sawyer refers to as being the key to musical conversation and the process by which the performer contributes something new to the flow of interaction, fade 'asymptomatically in importance' (Sawyer 1996: 283). These entailments are replaced by a 'reflexively calibrating poetic indexicality', the result of elaborate layerings of poetic structures that produce a highly ossified form, which is not amenable to individual performance variation (Sawyer 1996: 289). This form does not allow performers to perform actions which have an indexically entailing force on other participants. In other words, the possibility to converse becomes limited, and a tendency to reproduce structures becomes important. Sawyer notes that in the ethnographic cultures he cites, the more highly ritualised the performance genres are, the more culturally valued they become.

Laudan Nooshin similarly calls for linguistics as a model through which to understand the underlying rules by which individuals create unique musical statements (Nooshin 1998: 111). Drawing on Berliner's model, she explores the Iranian tradition of *Dastgah Segah* as an act of fusion and transformation that 'transcends the simple memorisation of alternative phrases and their subsequent selection and re-arrangement in performance' (Nooshin 1998: 110). She also regards these structures as emergent, possessing an internal dynamic which in turn generates new ideas. In this way, she suggests 'the performance tradition comprises an ever-changing kaleidoscope of patterns in which no two musical expressions are the same' (Nooshin 1998: 110-111).

Sawyer's contributions clearly move us beyond the simple realisation that within improvised traditions there are building blocks or points of departure. His

conceptualisation of improvisation is, in my mind, the most sophisticated and convincing to date, yet it still lacks an insight into the relationships between improvised performances, cultural meaning and issues of selfhood. While Sawyer's work has provided much of the conceptual background of my own understanding of improvisation, I hope to develop a model which simultaneously addresses Pressing's third criteria to account for the origin of novel behaviour in improvisation *and* the relationship between musical structures and cultural meaning. This becomes possible through a consideration of the imagination and the ways in which the imagination manifests itself in improvisation according to three different levels: the reproductive, the productive and the cultural. By understanding these levels according to a dialectical process of improvisation, we can understand the ways in which improvisation shapes culture and mediates reality.

With this in mind, I shall continue to explore the fundamental paradox that lies at the heart of jazz improvisation; a paradox which reflects improvisation's status as a simultaneously free and fixed performance genre; a paradox which continually stresses the importance of continuity and cultural influence while also placing a high premium on imagination; a paradox which generates lengthy and complex systems of protocols and typologies which determine precedence and precisely correct procedure, while finding aesthetic merit only in creativity and spontaneity; a paradox which emphasises the importance of the community while valuing the unique expressions of the individual. By moving beyond this dualistic model, I hone in on the jazz language and its capacity to configure and reconfigure itself in a dialectical rather than dualistic manner.

CHAPTER THREE

The Development of the Jazz Tradition

Imagined communities

No longer the domain of the urban elite[29] the culture of jazz improvisation has extended its reach into people's homes, the World Wide Web, libraries, all levels of schooling, music workshops and so on. In addition to this, the culture of jazz improvisation has been identified as a lucrative market controlled by market forces and homogenising ideologies. These two interrelated phenomena have given rise to a proliferation of different attitudes towards jazz. Technological advancement and the pervasive role of print and recording media, has given rise to an entirely different jazz community. In this chapter I begin to consider the ways in which these sociological developments have disrupted the improvisatory imagination and whether or not the integrative function of ideology in the jazz tradition has been frozen, and schematisation and rationalisation has prevailed.

In order to explore the nature of the jazz community, it is useful to draw attention to Benedict Anderson's notion of the imagined community (1983). For Anderson, the most important development that enabled the propagation of nationalist consciousness was what he termed 'print capitalism', referring in particular to widely circulated editions of the Bible and the press media that standardised vernacular languages through mass media distribution. This standardisation enabled administrative centralisation. Anderson discovers that with the advent of print capitalism in the eighteenth century, symbolic and religious languages were replaced

[29] I am referring to the dominance of the urban social community in the development of jazz. This obviously does not assume that jazz musicians as a group were part of any larger social 'elite'.

by national print languages which aided in the establishment of nations. Furthermore, this process gave rise to language as a fixed entity, and finally created languages of power.

It is interesting to consider the development of the culture of jazz improvisation in terms of the imagined community and to consider whether the ideological function of jazz's symbolic language shifted from an integrative to a distortive one. Jazz, like many other improvised musical traditions, has been characterised by its oral promulgation. Accounts of early jazz performers recall learning to improvise by ear. Much of jazz, it is believed, grew out of a blues tradition – a vocal based genre in which melodies were composed, often extemporaneously, within a simple chord progression.[30] While jazz musicians were often musically literate, it was only the compositions which required reading. Improvisation, by contrast, was a process, it was believed, that emerged from one's own flights of imagination and did not require notation.

Grasping the ineffable

During the days of the gramophone it was possible to vary the speed of a record. Slowing the speed down enabled the aspiring improviser to grasp with greater ease, longer and more demanding passages. In addition to emulating recordings, aspiring jazz musicians would typically attend concerts and jam sessions. At such social gatherings young musicians listened carefully and tried to absorb the sounds they were hearing. They learned to identify styles, chord progressions, performance

[30] Of course, jazz also had its roots in ragtime and other popular forms of entertainment which necessitated notation and the ability to read music. Scott Joplin, an early pioneer, aspired for his piano compositions to require the same virtuosic demands as Frederic Chopin's mazurkas.

gestures and the ways in which the musicians interacted. Often, the atmosphere was thoroughly affecting and the young musicians' idols would be inspirational, virtuosic, sophisticated and cool. Contrasting with the brevity of the recordings imposed by the physical restrictions of the disc itself, live sessions were characterised by the soloists stretching out, playing chorus after chorus, and illustrating their endless stock of ideas and tireless creative stamina. This is where the young musician would learn what jazz was. The intimacy of the jazz club, often located underground in a seductive yet less than salubrious neighbourhood,[31] featured performances late into the night by musicians whose aloof demeanour somehow secluded them from the concerns of everyday life. These musicians nurtured a community and enabled the development of distinct symbols, values and rituals: a vernacular language known as jazz.

By the time the culture of jazz improvisation had reached maturity in the late 1940s, there were dozens of musicians in different cities across the United States, Europe and Asia, playing in clubs and recording for major labels. Despite this boom, jazz still remained true to its oral spirit. Moreover, central to its cultural aesthetic was the ideal of originality. This aesthetic informed jazz musicians that a solo should reflect one's individual take on life. As a result of jazz improvisation's orality, this aesthetic was maintained with relative ease. Aspiring musicians would creatively combine what they heard on records and in clubs in a way that enabled them to make their own unique statement.[32] By the 1950s, the jazz tradition had developed into an

[31] Jazz was born in Storyville, the red light district of New Orleans. As a child, Louis Armstrong developed the power in his lungs from sounding the horn while he delivered coal to the brothels in Storyville. Jelly Roll Morton played piano in whorehouses and his music helped to choreograph the prostitute's activities.

[32] Many accounts of the ways in which jazz musicians learned and developed their skills as improvisers can be found in biographies (see for instance Porter 1998; Owens 1974).

amalgamation of styles, each handed down through generations and cherished as a set of core, shared understandings. For instance, the blues pervaded jazz players' vocabularies in addition to favourite chord progressions found in popular tunes such as 'I Got Rhythm', 'Cherokee', 'How High The Moon' and song forms developed by Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and George Gershwin who contributed to the 'Great American Songbook'.

Once the vernacular had been learned, the individual was left alone to discover his or her own personality. The model of education was oral; it involved the direct experience and observation of the music as it unfolded. William McDaniel reflects on this early period of jazz education:

> The jazz tradition was oral, reflecting the African American music history of passing down songs from generation to generation, group to group, and person to person. The evolution of the blues and the subsequent development of new instrumental expression during the first quarter of the twentieth century by 'parlour house professors' – the early jazz artists who worked in the bars and bordellos – wind instrument players indicate that a great deal of teaching must have and did occur. (McDaniel 1993: 119)

By the late 1940s small communities emerged engendering distinctive styles – styles which continued to develop and evolve at a rapid pace: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk and Max Roach developed a dialect known as bebop; Lennie Tristano, Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz created the 'cool school'; Art Blakey, Horace Silver, Hank Mobley and Lee Morgan pioneered hard bop in the 1950s and

1960s; John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock introduced modal jazz. Furthermore, distinct groups nurtured distinctive sounds: Art Blakey's band offered a different way of hearing jazz than the Miles Davis Quintet; John Coltrane's musical ideology profoundly affected his music and contrasted with the music of Sonny Rollins; Bill Evans' trio developed an unparalleled empathy among its constituent parts; and Charles Mingus and Max Roach composed music that reflected their political aspirations. By the late 1960s jazz had reached its peak. It then spiralled off in myriad directions, exploring and accommodating every avenue of, and possibility for, human creativity. From its humble beginnings jazz music had become a complex and enigmatic music – a music which was intensely focussed, often unrelenting, but infectious and soulful.

As the print and recording media documented these ephemeral and fleeting sounds, jazz became a fixed entity and stylistic boundaries were set. Pedagogical methods gave way to a unified field of exchange and communication via syllabi and a typology of 'hip' phrases and fixed languages. This symbolic language provided the ideological mechanisms by which the community integrated its members around a certain set of shared values and traditions. The following chapter outlines some of the features of this jazz language and considers the symbolic function of the idiomatic phrases and patterns that have developed through time.

CHAPTER FOUR

Preparing for the Unexpected

Idiomatic vocabularies

Having identified the development of a 'fixed language' in the jazz imagined community, this chapter introduces a number of the ways in which jazz musicians learn to improvise, and discusses the significance of the analytical models and compositional devices that represent and codify this language. It becomes clear that there is a textual element to improvisation. Improvising necessitates a vast pooling of phrases, scales, musical units and gestures that have been inscribed onto recordings and notated transcriptions. While improvisation's mode of presentation (like any musical performance) is 'in the moment', it would be a mistake to overlook the non-oral, inscribed nature of compositional devices that enable the performance to communicate meaning.

By glancing at any collection of transcribed improvisation, phrases reappear time after time and become a significant part of a performer's stylistic vocabulary. Moreover, many of these vocabulary items enter into common usage or, as one of my informants put it, 'stuff that everybody plays'. As I outline some of these shared, synthetic, compositional operations that characterise successful improvisation two contrasting interpretations emerge which, in turn, will constitute the remainder of this dissertation. The first concerns the extent to which formal compositional structures reflect a hegemonic musical formalism. This interpretation overlooks important aspects of timbre, rhythm and interaction, characteristic of the jazz tradition. Related to this interpretation is the persistent concern over the extent to which this hegemony has fallen prey to the ideological distortion of the culture industry. In other words,

has the print industry and the rationalisation, reification and expropriation of improvisatory languages led to the rational administration of culture and the subversion of the productive, cultural imagination?

The contrasting interpretation reconsiders positive aspects of this compositional process as a process of reconfiguration characteristic of the productive imagination. It attempts to understand how the synthetic, compositional devices, outlined in this chapter, represent a working, through which the identity of the jazz culture is negotiated. In other words, the compositional components of improvisation, whose mode of presentation is temporal, work to create, transmit and preserve cultural meanings. Their objectification as signs and symbols in a tradition bears witness to the human effort to be creative.

Following an outline of the ways in which jazz musicians compose in the moment through a number of well-known and codified devices, we become confronted with a complex of questions of musical meaning, aesthetics and cultural value. I shall illustrate the ways in which our understandings of jazz have addressed these questions, largely in terms of an intra-musical cultural and aesthetic meaning, as well as an extra-musical one. Following this, I will attempt to link the two through a dialectic model of improvisation.

Developing an idiomatic vocabulary

For improvisers working within particular improvisatory idioms, it is necessary to be fully conversant in idiomatic vocabularies, syntax and lexicographic standards. Approaching jazz improvisation for the first time, the improviser discovers templates,

patterns, phrases and motifs that become part of a common stock of vocabulary items and stylistic conventions which, in time, become assimilated and reproduced. Outlining these fundamentals, in addition to the standard jazz harmonic progressions, provides an insight into the ways in which musicians negotiate chord changes. However, it appears that as a musician learns, little of what they do appears to be actually improvisatory but is rather more like learning a typology.

Licks and phrases

Licks can be understood as isolated features of a player's stylistic vocabulary. While, through time, licks become seamlessly integrated into a player's improvisations, they begin to enter the improviser's vocabulary as isolated, transcribable musical 'objects'. The prevalence of licks and phrases as isolated musical and structural units, has engendered a proliferation of textbook-based pedagogical resources in wide circulation in the culture of jazz improvisation. This methodology shares similarities with Lévi-Strauss' idea of the *bricoleur*, whose job it is to basically reassemble pre-existing materials in the creation of objects (1966). These materials do not necessarily determine a specific use; rather, they are related to all previous ways in which they have been used. It is through developing different ways of using an object that the *bricoleur* extends a more nuanced and deeper understanding of an object which in turn enables him or her to envisage inventive uses for the object.

In searching for a definition of improvisation, Paul Berliner comes strikingly close to Lévi-Strauss' conception of *bricolage*:

> Improvisation involves reworking precomposed material and designs in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped, and transformed under the special

> conditions of performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation. (Berliner 1994: 241)

Similarly, Barrett writes that:

> Jazz players, junkyard collectors, and technical reps find themselves in the middle of messes having to solve problems in situ, creating interpretations out of potentially incoherent materials, piecing together other musicians' patterns, their own memories of musical patterns, interweaving general concepts with the particulars of the current situation, creating coherent composite stories. (Barrett 1998: 616)

According to these perspectives, by exploring all the previous ways in which musical phrases as objects have been used before, the improviser-as-*bricoleur* develops different ways of using these phrases, and extends a deeper and potentially more innovative understanding of the phrase.

Jerry Coker, in his bestselling book, *Elements of the Jazz Language for the Developing Improviser*, also implicitly follows the model of the *bricoleur* (1991). He urges students to learn 20 musical devices that he has isolated and identified as comprising the fundamentals of most jazz soloist's vocabularies – devices which 'lie about' in the jazz tradition, that do not necessarily have a specific use, but which are associated with the ways in which they have been used before. Coker illustrates these devices/phrases/objects with examples from well-known jazz artists' patterns and licks based on the following: arpeggios (which he calls 'change running'), digital patterns and scalar patterns, 7-3 resolution, 3-♭9 resolution sequences, bebop scale, bebop lick, harmonic generalisation, enclosure, sequence, chromatic elaboration of

static harmony, quotes, 'Cry Me a River' lick, 'Gone But Not Forgotten' lick, linear chromaticism, tri-tone substitutions/altered dominant, backdoor progression as a substitute for V7, ♯ii°7 as a substitute for V7, bar-line shifts, side-slipping/outside playing, and errors.

Having isolated and identified these features, he suggests that the student learns them in all 12 keys in order that he or she too can have a common vocabulary and start to improvise. Having then mastered the phrases the musician is advised to apply patterns to common progressions found in tunes such as 'All The Things You Are', which is replete with characteristic ii-V-Is.[33] One particularly persistent pattern in jazz improvisation derives from small cells of 4 to 8 notes. These cells can be arranged digitally according to the numerical sequence of a scale and its mathematical permutations. For instance, the notes 1-2-3-5 of a major scale in C would refer to C-D-E-G. This can be rearranged into groups of 4: 1-2-3-1, 1-2-3-5, 1-3-5-3 or in groups of 8: 1-2-3-4-5-3-2-1, 1-2-3-4-5-7-6-5, 1-5-3-2-1-2-3-5 (Coker 1991: 8). While these examples all begin on the root note to determine tonality, obviously they can be applied to any note of the chord, and dissonances occur when chromatic tones are introduced. Digital patterns are favourably used by jazz musicians at fast tempos and have provided useful devices in complex changes such as 'Giant Steps'.[34] He goes on to state, with reference to Coltrane's solo, that 'although the solos are improvised, the nature of the tune's progressions and tempos, both tunes being made

[33] The ii-V-I is perhaps the most ubiquitous chord sequence and cadential figure to be found in jazz harmony. In C major, this sequence reads: Dm7-G7-Cmaj7. The famous tune, 'Autumn Leaves', is entirely based on the alternation between a major and a minor ii-V-I.

[34] Coker points out that 'the [digital] device was brought suddenly and sharply into notice by John Coltrane, whose brilliant solos on 'Giant Steps' and 'Countdown' made use of a number of digital patterns, each occurring literally dozens of times' (1991: 8).

up of quickly-modulating chords of short duration...at a very fast tempo, encouraged a more mechanistic approach, to say the least' (Coker 1991: 8).

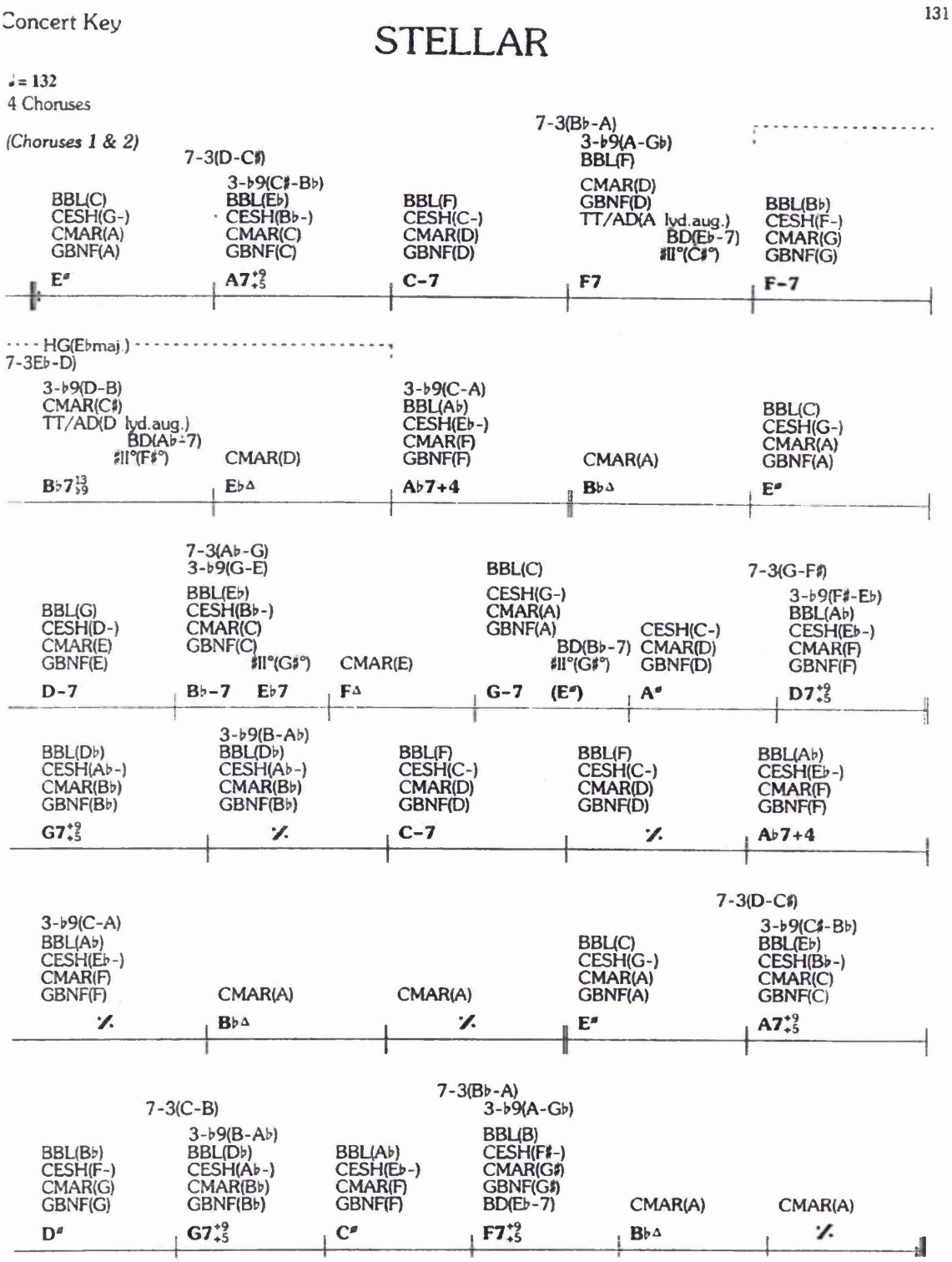
'Cry Me a River'

One particular phrase used frequently by a large number of jazz musicians derives from the first phrase of the song 'Cry Me a River': a descending figure that accommodates the minor chord, the dominant 7^{th}, the half-diminished chord, an altered chord and a maj7(♯5) chord. The phrase begins on the 9^{th} of the minor chord, the 13^{th} of the V7 chord, the 4^{th} of the half-diminished chord, the augmented 9^{th} of the altered chord and the major 7^{th} of the maj7(♯5) chord.[35]

Having isolated, identified and learned these patterns in all 12 keys, Coker then encourages the student to combine this lick with the other 19 musical devices in the book and attempt a 'solo' over some popular chord changes. He abbreviates each device, for instance CMAR refers to the 'Cry Me a River' phrase, TT refers to tritone substitution, BBL refers to a common bebop lick, CESH refers to chromatic elaboration of static harmony and GBNF refers to the 'Gone But Not Forgotten' lick. In the following example of 'Stellar', Coker's arrangement of Victor Young's 'Stella by Starlight' (Coker 1991: 131), improvisation begins to look as it has never looked before: a schematic, atemporal, spatio-durational representation.

[35] See appendix 1.1 for examples of this phrase in use.

Figure 1.1 Formal plan of 'Stellar' (Coker 1991: 131)



To illustrate Coker's schematic model, I have constructed a notated model which translates Coker's design into musical figures (see appendix 1.2). This clearly illustrates the ways in which improvisation has a design. It can be formally arranged according to structural devices in which devices are combined and recombined according to a harmonic sequence. Moreover, by relating the improviser to Lévi-Strauss' image of the *bricoleur*, we can conclude that meaning is derived from this structural rearrangement. This perspective clearly echoes the formalist claim that music is self-sufficient and transcends the material conditions of its production.

Thomas Owens' musicological account of the improvisational vocabulary of alto saxophonist Charlie Parker is another paradigmatic example of this formalist representation (Owens 1974). Owens identified and isolated about 100 phrases that recur in Parker's solos, suggesting that there was in actual fact a large formulaic and pre-composed element to his improvisatory style. Again, this study reflects the dominant trend in both jazz scholarship and education that understands improvisation, in essence, as consisting of an extensive network of melodic formulae that are combined and recombined according to a generative grammar.

Owens explores the ways that Parker, like many other important improvisers, developed a personal repertory of melodic formulae that he employed in the course of performance. He illustrates the many ways in which Parker reshaped, combined and phrased these formulae, so that no two choruses were alike, leading Owens to conclude that parts of his seemingly spontaneous performances were actually pre-composed (Owens 1974). From this emphasis on the pre-composed, one imagines that Parker is methodically writing down phrases in his practice room, which then

undergo a calculative memorisation process prior to, and outside of, the performance context. Owens proceeds to state that 'no-one can create fluent, coherent melodies in real time without having a well-rehearsed bag of melodic tricks ready' (Owens 1974: 122).

Analysis and pedagogy overlap in the culmination of Coker's book, which features a transcription and analysis of solos by Clifford Brown, an exemplary bebop soloist, and Michael Brecker, an exemplary 'post-bop' contemporary saxophonist, over the standard chord changes of 'There Will Never Be Another You' and 'What Is This Thing Called Love?', respectively. Throughout the solos, he annotates particular phrases with what he has outlined as the major elements of the jazz language. Having 'tagged' each solo with the elements of the jazz language, Coker then summarises his annotated analysis with a tabulated illustration of the number of occurrences of each element.

This, of course, is reminiscent of Owens' approach, but supports the added claim that these elements are universal within modern jazz vocabularies and this process of analysis is a necessary prerequisite to successful improvisation. In Brown's solo, lasting eight choruses (16 bar form), Coker identifies 92 occurrences of elements; in Brecker's three choruses (32 bar form), meanwhile, he identifies 73, but fails to address the stylistic differences between the two players and it is left to the student to interpret these. Interestingly, the strong recurrence of digital patterns in Brecker's solo compared to that of Brown's, in addition to his predilection for bar-line shifts and linear chromaticism, identifies the former as a player firmly rooted in

the contemporary post-bop idiom. Brown, on the other hand, emphasises the typical bebop '7-3 and 3-♭9 resolutions' and 'enclosure' elements.[36]

The application of the jazz language

While many may object that this method is merely an academic form of representation and has no place in the real world of jazz improvisation, consider these comments made by guitarist Nick Keller the morning after he attended the Thelonius Monk Institute jam session in West Hollywood in January 2003:

> Yeah, me and Grant [Peters] were laughing coz there was this piano player who was playing 'Stella' and man, we were counting the times he played that lick, you know...[plays 'Cry Me a River' lick on his guitar], in all these different keys, we kept, like, looking at each other and cracking up! (23-01-03)

Fellow alto saxophonist Will Clarke in the UCLA jazz ensemble, admitted that Coker's book had been a helpful basis on which to develop his vocabulary. He suggested that individuals elaborate on Coker's 18 designs and figure out more phrases that are in common usage today:

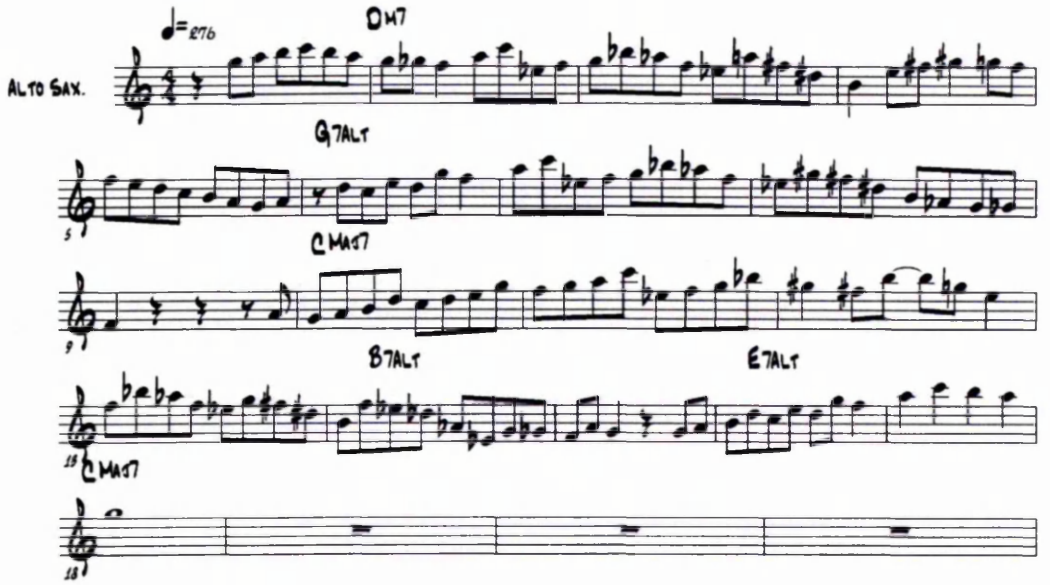
> Actually, I found it a real good way to make my playing sound modern and hip, like that contemporary sound. I'd listen to guys like Kenny Garrett over the blues or over some standards, and see what he does over ii-Vs and over blues or, like minor blues or funk stuff, and then I'd get that down in all the keys and,

[36] Perhaps this type of analysis would be better suited as a guide to idiomatic elements of bop compared to post-bop language than as a claim to jazz's universal and autonomous coherency. I shall discuss later the ways in which particular structural aspects of improvisation are sedimented into a tradition in which style is an important index of genre and exists as a necessary complement to the innovations that improvisation fosters.

like, see where it fits in. That book gives you a real method-like way of seeing how everything fits and can get you right out there sounding hip. (22-10-02)

At our weekly rehearsals, Clarke and I would often trade ideas. We spent many hours dissecting solos, recommending new recordings and sharing new techniques, altissimo fingerings and hip phrases. His systematic approach to improvisation attested to the power that the formulaic approach has in jazz music education. Indeed, when I spoke about learning to improvise it was often difficult to articulate ideas that fell outside of Coker's schematic approach. As a result, it was easy to notice the economy of material resources that underlie jazz improvisation. I recall one discussion in which he referred me to Kenny Garrett's solo on 'Reedus Dance', an original composition recording on his album *Introducing Kenny Garrett* (1984), as a great example of hip, contemporary playing from which he learned a lot of 'tricks'. He drew my attention to one particular passage that we listened to together, which I later transcribed:

Figure 1.2 **Kenny Garrett licks**
'Reedus Dance'. Kenny Garrett Quintet. (*Introducing Kenny Garrett.* Criss Cross Jazz 1014. Recorded: New York, NY, 28 December 1984.)



In this passage, Garrett deploys two of his most characteristic melodic devices which identify him as a modern saxophonist with a sophisticated 'post-bop' vocabulary. My attention was drawn to Garrett's use of a 1235 digital pattern, shown in bars 10-11 of this example, which derives from Coltrane and is widely used in modern playing. Over a Cmaj7 chord, Garrett superimposes 1235 patterns derived from the G major, C major, F major and E♭ major scales. For Clarke and I, however, Garrett's use of pentatonic scales and the ways in which, by superimposing fragments over harmonies that do not correspond, he creates organised dissonance – a hallmark of modern jazz improvisation – was more illuminating and instructive.[37]

Bricolage in performance

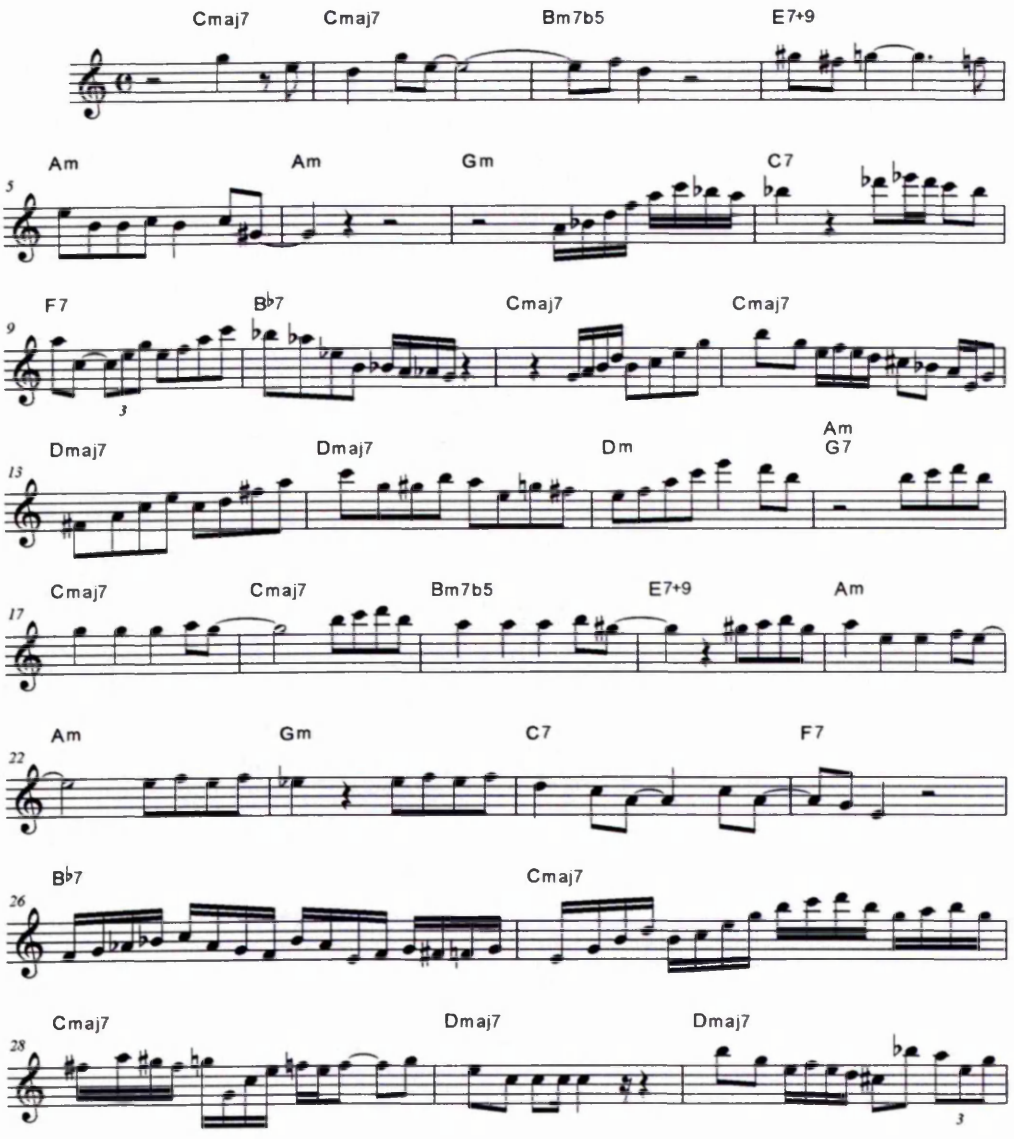
To illustrate some of the ways in which musicians incorporate and develop precomposed materials in their solos as a compositional process of *bricolage*, I would like to examine a solo performed by one of my informants during an end-of-quarter concert.[38] These concerts were informal events held at lunchtime, designed to showcase the different ensembles that had been working together over the quarter. With permission, I recorded a few of the concerts (in fact, they were recorded anyway for archive purposes), and a few stood out as good examples of what were regarded as high level solos using common modern jazz vocabulary. The solo is over the chord

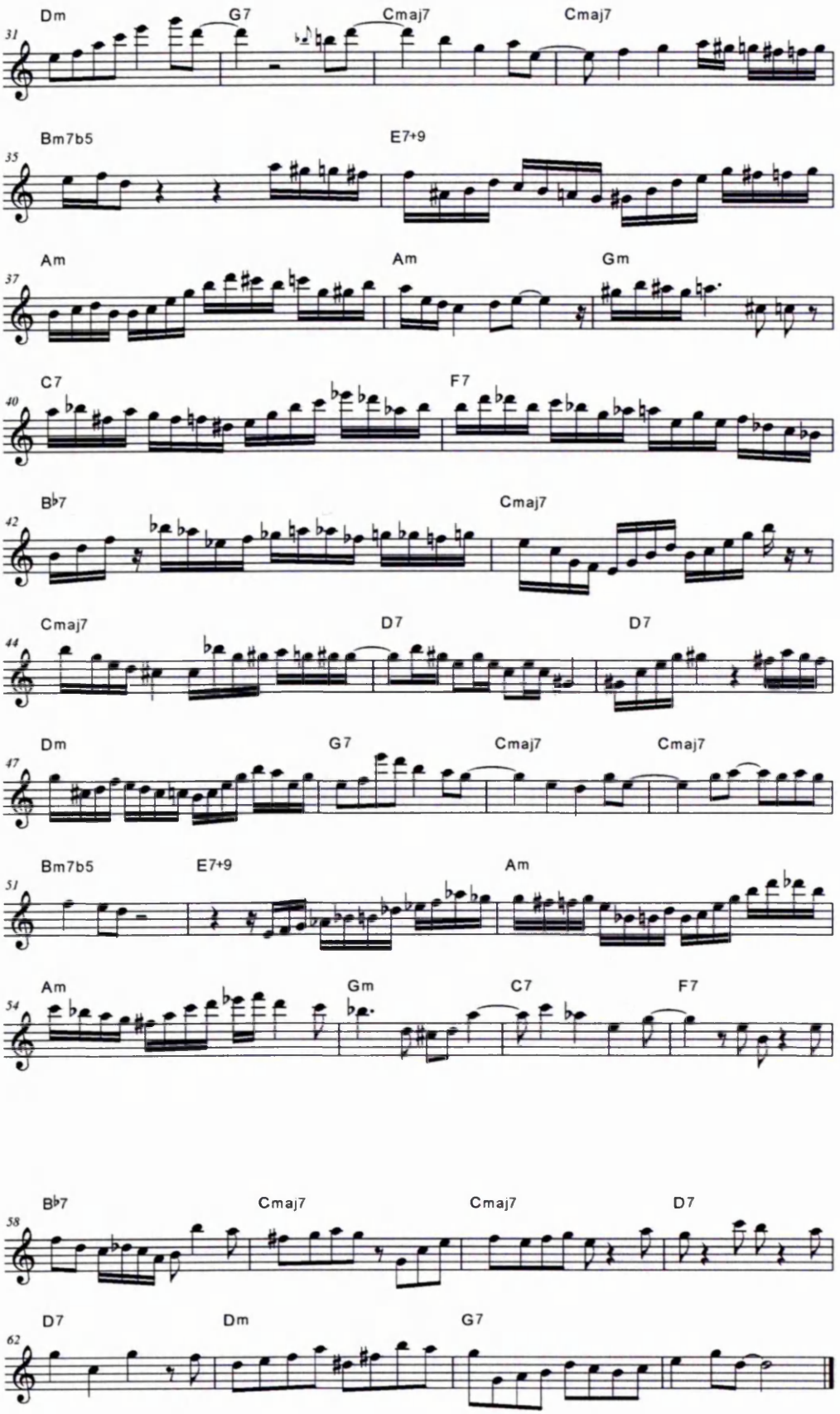
[37] In the first three bars of the example, for instance, Garrett superimposes F minor and B major pentatonic scales over a Dm7 chord. As can be seen further on, Garrett employs this same figure over an altered G7 chord (bars 7-8), a C major chord (bar 13) and an altered B7 chord (bar 14). Such frequency of use teaches the student musician that it is a pattern worth studying and learning. My colleague demonstrated this particular pattern as something that he himself had incorporated into a Coker-like method of systematically applying principles to improvisatory contexts.

[38] It was agreed that crediting the performer would not do full justice to his/her ability, since this performance is only reflective of a particular time and day in the past. Musicians I worked with were in a particularly sensitive and potentially insecure stage in their career, and this performer requested to remain anonymous, although was happy for me to use the example. This performance was fairly typical of the standard I became familiar with. My transcription conforms to standard jazz transcription procedure and is devoid of tempo and phrase markings. Furthermore, there are some instances in which harmony is implied and may not correspond with the chord changes (see for example b.26). For a discussion of my transcription methodology see page 191.

changes to 'There Will Never Be Another You', composed by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren.

Figure 1.3 **Transcription of 'There Will Never Be Another You'**
'There Will Never Be Another You'. Anonymous soloist, UCLA Jazz Combo. (*Noon Concert Series: Schoenberg Hall.* Iain Foreman. Recorded: University of California at Los Angeles, 15 March 2003.)




Dm
G7
Cmaj7
Cmaj7
31
Bm7b5
E7+9
35
Am
Am
Gm
37
C7
F7
40
B♭7
Cmaj7
42
Cmaj7
D7
D7
44
Dm
G7
Cmaj7
Cmaj7
47
Bm7b5
E7+9
Am
51
Am
Gm
C7
F7
54
B♭7
Cmaj7
Cmaj7
D7
58
D7
Dm
G7
62

I shall briefly identify some of the principal melodic devices and compositional structures that feature in this solo, to outline the ways in which common phrases and harmonic and melodic principles are employed as building blocks throughout the jazz community. Coker's formal analytic method, it appears, can provide the basis for developing jazz musicians to create improvised solos.

To begin with, the phrase over bars 7-9 is a standard bebop-era ii-V-I pattern. Bar 11 also contains a common bebop change running pattern that also occurs in Clifford Brown's solo over the same changes in the eleventh bar of the sequence (analysed by Coker 1991: 85) and is identified as Coker's first principle. Bar 10 is the 'Cry Me a River' lick; bar 13 is another change running pattern modulated to D. The opening 9 bars (17-25) of the second chorus feature sequential ideas – Coker's ninth melodic device; bar 26 contains a digital pattern – Coker's second principle; bar 27 is another change running sequence similar to bar 11 which is then extended into another digital sequence. Bars 30 and 31 comprise what is basically an abbreviated version of the turnaround in bars 12-15. This pattern also occurs in the next chorus in the turnaround section in bars 43-44. Bars 48-49 are a variation on 32-33, and bars 61-62 reprise the opening melody, constituting Coker's eleventh principle: the quote. In bar 63 there is a classic bebop substitute pattern that is identified as number 14 of Coker's essential patterns. This pattern substitutes the V7 chord with a diminished scale built on the augmented 2^{nd} of the tonic chord. In this case, the G7 is replaced with a D♯ diminished chord. Coker's 13^{th} principle, the 'Gone But Not Forgotten' lick, is clearly stated in bar 40 over a Gm chord. One of the most common devices the soloist uses is enclosure – Coker's eighth principle. This device outlines the object tone by approaching it via both upper and lower leading tones. The eventual

note is thus coloured and delayed by chromatic neighbouring tones, thus adding tension. This soloist uses this device to good effect in bars 28, 37, 39, 41, 42, 46-47 and 53-54. Also in abundance is the bebop lick – Coker's sixth principle – which occurs in bars 26, 36, 42 and 53. There is an augmented sequence in bars 45-46, and a half diminished scale in bar 52, representing Coker's seventh principle: harmonic generalisation. There are also various instances of 7-3 and 3-9 harmonic resolutions: see for instance bars 30 and 44.

In short, Coker would seemingly be happy to provide an analysis summary of this solo which illustrates a fair number of his twenty devices. Indeed, from such an analysis, one could reasonably assume that Coker's *bricolage* approach is well-founded. Young musicians appear to have yielded to his method as a way in which to create 'proper' sounding jazz solos according to a typology of standard idiomatic phrases.

The focus on improvisation's internal relationships, as outlined above, elucidates a significant aspect of the culture of jazz improvisation. This seemingly textual nature of jazz appears antithetical to an enduring image of extemporised, improvisatory creativity. However, there has been a determined effort to distinguish texts from performances in musicological writing. Cook suggests that we distinguish between the musical text and the performance (Cook 2004). He believes that if we think in terms of musical texts, then it is inevitable that we will think of performance as the reproduction of those texts 'as the representation in sound and time of something that has its own autonomous existence independent of performance' (Cook: 2004: 7).

In the pages that follow, I further illustrate the ways in which jazz improvisation appears to have an autonomous existence independent of performance. Furthermore, I illustrate that these text-like elements have a hierarchy of forms based on degrees of increasing complexity. Beginning with the simplest expressions of chord changes, I illustrate how the jazz musician systematically gains degrees of complexity which appear to isolate the autonomous forms further away from the performance context. This isolation which, it could be argued, attempts to elevate jazz to an autonomy severed from its cultural context and invested with an imperialist metaphysical dignity, raises a number of important sociological questions. In reproving the notion of musical formalism, a new generation of jazz criticism has refined a set of interpretive strategies that seek to decode jazz's social and political meanings.

Making the changes [39]

According to the majority of my discussants, broadly speaking there are three different approaches or methods that enable making the changes. In reality, these methods are combined, but many student improvisers favour one method over another. One approach is exemplified by Coker's method where isolated phrases and patterns are learned as 'cells' or 'units' and pasted onto the relevant chord progression. Another is simply learning to construct melodies through the chord sequences. This necessitates a good working knowledge of harmony and the ways in which, for instance, a flattened 7^{th} can resolve down a semitone onto a major 3^{rd} in a V-I sequence. By outlining chords 'horizontally', a progression's harmonic

[39] 'Changes' is shorthand for chord changes.

movement is spelled out. Indeed, this was the dominant approach that defined the swing and bebop movement until the advent of 'modal jazz'.

The third approach is based on the 'chord-scale method'. This enables an improviser to identify a scale or mode which corresponds with a chord. Since scales become the basis for this approach rather than chords, a 'vertical' dimension predominates with less attention given to the harmonic function of 3rds and 7ths and a greater concern is placed on linear, modal tensions and organised dissonances. This is the dominant approach found today, and it forms the basis of the 'post-bop' style.[40]

The basis of mainstream (i.e. not free or *avant garde*) jazz improvisation is spontaneous creation of melodies that are built on the basic chord progressions of a song form. At the most basic level, the notes available for improvisation are dictated by the fundamental notes associated with each chord: the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th. This process is called 'playing' or 'making changes'. When learning how to improvise, students are encouraged to memorise a handful of harmonic formulae that constitute common progressions often encountered in the culture of jazz improvisation. The most simple of these is the blues. This 12 bar progression is familiar even to novices, since it has constituted the basis of so much popular music. The progression is based around three chords: the tonic flattened 7th for four bars, modulating to the subdominant flattened 7th for two bars, returning to the tonic for two bars, and in the

[40] In *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation for Improvisation,* jazz theorist George Russell identifies four different types of improvising: in-going vertical (chord based), in-going horizontal (scale or key based), out-going vertical (outside playing based on chords), and outgoing horizontal (outside playing based on scales) (Russell 1959). Essentially they cover the same ground but omit learning phrases, the central aspect of the present study.

final four bars modulating to the dominant 7^{th} chord for one bar, the subdominant 7^{th} for one bar and finally resolving on the tonic 7^{th} chord.

Figure 1.4 Simple blues sequence

| C7 | C7 | C7 | C7 |

| F7 | F7 | C7 | C7 |

| G7 | F7 | C7 | C7 |

This progression is often the first progression that beginning improvisers learn how to master. Its structure has the added benefit of accommodating perfectly the blues scale – a pentatonic scale (C-E♭-F-G-B♭) with the addition of the diminished 5^{th} (G♭), which is a characteristic 'blue note'. This scale provides what is in essence, an infallible way for a beginning improviser to create pleasing improvisations, since all of the notes in the scale will sound good over the entire progression.

However, as the improviser progresses, s/he notices that forms become more complex, and the blues scale – a linear melodic device – needs to be surpassed by an engagement with a song's harmonic structure. Indeed, in much of contemporary jazz, the 12 bar blues consists of considerably more than the simple progression outlined above. More characteristic of modern mainstream blues progressions is a progression such as this:

Figure 1.5 Bebop blues sequence

| C7 | F7 | C7 | Gm7 C7 |

| F7 | F7 | C7 | Em7 A7 |

| Dm7 | G7 | C7 | Dm7 G7 |

And in jam sessions across the United States and Europe, the modern blues progression is usually accepted to look, or sound, something like this:

Figure 1.6 Contemporary blues sequence

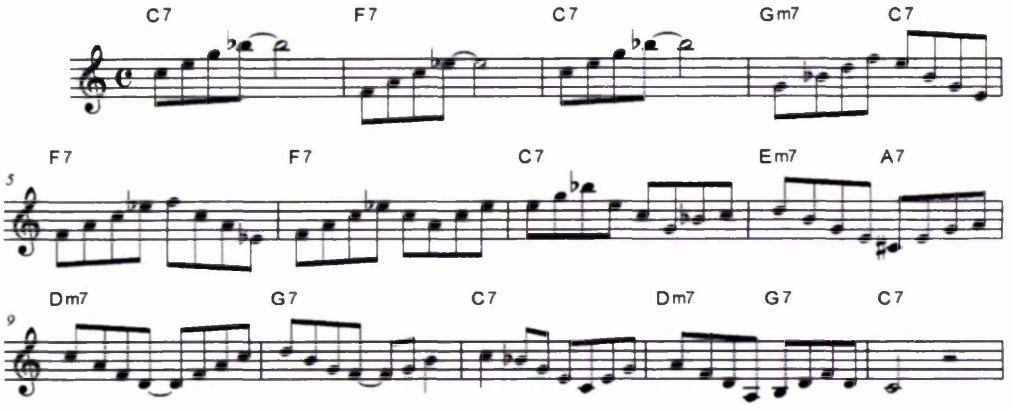
| C7 | F7 | C7 | Gm7 C7 |

| F7 | Fdim | C7 | Em7♭5 A7alt |

| Dm7 | G7alt | C7 A7alt | Dm7 G7alt |

While it is still possible to use the blues scale in many places during this progression, the introduction of passing ii-V patterns (Em7, A7) and turnarounds (Dm7, G7) demands an increasing harmonic sophistication. Furthermore, in order to generate a richer harmonic vocabulary that outlines the chords, rather than simply creating melodies using the blues scale and relying on its inherent harmonic sophistication to create tension and release, more experienced musicians are able to outline each individual chord. There are a number of ways of negotiating these harmonic challenges and, in reality, most improvisers combine approaches either subconsciously or consciously. For instance, it is possible to develop individual 'cells' – small groups of notes which outline strong harmonic intervals – in order to 'spell out' the chords. For instance, over the first bar of a blues progression it is possible to simply arpeggiate the C7 chord up to the 7^{th}, and then to transpose this arpeggio up a perfect 4^{th} over the F7 chord.

Figure 1.7 Outlining chords



Similarly, it is possible to develop voice leading techniques in which one dominant chord tone (root, 3rd, 5th, diminished 7th, or 9th) is allotted to each bar; the challenge is to move between these chord tones via the smallest intervals. For instance, in the blues progression above, in the first bar it is possible to play an E (the 3rd of a C7 chord), and then move a semitone below to an E♭ (the diminished 7th of an F7 chord).

Both voice leading and arpeggios provide common approaches that, above all, enable the aspiring improviser to acquaint him- or herself with the progressions, the resolutions and the internal logic of the harmony. In order to understand what goes on with chord changes and grasp the tonal movements, jazz musicians begin to outline a progression with arpeggios and dominant chord tones. During an ensemble session in September 2003, during which our group was given the assignment to learn 'Joy Spring', a composition by Clifford Brown (1954) which has a reasonably fast

and complex harmonic rhythm, our pianist, Grant Peters, explained that he had developed a systematic approach to 'change running':[41]

> I usually start just by playing the root motion. Then I'll do 1-5, 1-3-5 and 1-3-5-7 arpeggios for each chord. Next I try to play eighth-note arpeggios and then I try to play through the changes. Once I get to the end of one 4-note arpeggio, I try and pick the closest note of the next arpeggio and keep going. Once I get to the top of the keyboard I come back down, and I guess the idea is just to keep steady eighth-notes without stopping. That's how I get it lodged in my head and I can really *hear* the changes. (24-09-03)

Following these basic understandings of the fundamentals of jazz harmony, the improviser is motivated to systematically develop more sophisticated and complex variations.

Extending progressions

One of the first steps in extending progressions and developing a more sophisticated formal structure to a 12 bar blues sequence, for instance, would be by substituting the basic harmony with particular ii-V7-I sequences, adding passing chords and altering progressions or chord qualities. Once a musician has understood the process of learning harmonic progressions, and has come to terms with the mechanics of traditional cadence figures such as ii-V-Is, s/he will often begin to create ways of substituting traditional chords and progressions for more 'hip-sounding' ones. Substitutions also serve to make a bass line more interesting, and tend to generate a

[41] 'Change running' is another idiomatic phrase used to describe the process of outlining the chord sequence during an improvised solo.

greater degree of harmonic density and complexity which engenders a more interesting solo.

This substitution process can begin at the simplest level of adding a ii chord before every V7 chord encountered in a progression, and vice versa – wherever a ii chord is encountered, it can be complemented by adding a V7 chord after it. Tritone substitutions involve substituting the original V chord with a chord a tritone away. For example, by substituting a G7 chord with a D♭7 chord, a tritone substitution emerges; adding the ii chord in front of the D♭7 results in this common tritone substitute progression developed in the bebop era: A♭m7-D♭7-Cmaj7. Figure 1.8 illustrates the common progression D7| G7| Cmaj7 in a chart. According to the principles outlined here, this relatively static progression could be altered in a number of ways while maintaining the target Cmaj7 chord:

Figure 1.8 Altering progressions

|D7 | G7 | Cmaj7

|Am7 D7 | Dm7 G7 | Cmaj7

|Am7 D7 | A♭m7 D♭7 | Cmaj7

|E♭m7 A♭7 | Dm7 G7 | Cmaj7

|E♭m7 A♭7 |A♭m7 D♭7 | Cmaj7

Another way of substituting relatively straightforward harmony is by adding diminished and altered chords in order to colour the progression and contribute more tension. This gives improvisers a more modern-sounding guide and a structured way

to 'hip up' their playing. Below is an example of a typical, complex bebop 12 bar blues progression with altered tritone harmonies:

Figure 1.9 Blues progression with tritone substitutions

| Cmaj7 | Bm7(♭5) E7(♭9) | Am7 D7 | Gm7 C7 |

| F7 | Fm7 B♭7 | Em7 A7 | E♭m7 A♭7 |

| Dm7 | G7 | Cmaj7 A7alt | Dm7 G7 |

Saxophonist Will Clarke directed me to this particular interpretation of Miles Davis' composition 'Solar' which uses straightforward harmonic progressions. The original progression is in normal type and the altered progression is shown in bold:

Figure 1.10 'Solar'

Original Progression:

| Cm(maj7) | Cm(maj7) | Cm7 | Gm7 C7 |
| Fmaj7 | Fmaj7 | Fm7 | B♭7 |

| E♭maj7 | E♭m7 A♭7 | D♭maj7 | Dm7(♭5) G7 |

Altered Progression:

| Cm6 G13(♭9) | Cm6 Am7(♭5) D7(♭9) | Gm7 D7(♭9) | Gm7 C7(♭9♭5) |

| Fmaj7 C7(♯5♯9) C7(♭9♭5) | Fmaj7 Gm7 C7(♭9) | Fm7 B9(♯5) | B♭7sus B♭7(♭9♭5) |

| E♭maj7(♯5) | E♭m7 A♭7sus A♭13 | D♭maj7 | Dm7(♭5) G7(♯9♯5) |

At this level of harmonic complexity, or fast harmonic rhythm, it is not sufficient to simply know the major chord tones and have the ability to build arpeggios over each chord. Indeed, such an approach would sound thoroughly

uninspired. Rather, it requires knowledge of ideas and phrases that have already been formulated in the culture of jazz improvisation which are subsequently learned, appropriated and reproduced on new occasions. These phrases illustrate to the beginner improviser the ways in which such substitutions and unconventional progressions are dealt with in interesting, melodic and aesthetically congruent ways. Moreover, since these phrases are shared within the jazz community across time and place, they are inherently social and symbolic in nature.

Learning ii-V-Is

In a similar fashion to Coker's method, jazz musicians learn a stock of ii-V7-I patterns which they can use in progressions such as are found in the blues and jazz standards. These range from a simple diatonic outlining of the chord to more complex, chromatic variations. Some are learned aurally from recordings, others extracted personally from transcriptions, and others yet are taken from the catalogue of idiomatic phrases found in transcription volumes. However, there is a huge market for abstract ii-V patterns which are considered common usage. Some books devote over 200 pages to developing typologies – line after line of ii-V-I patterns. There is even a book entitled *Hip ii-V-I Vocabulary Licks* (see http://www.jazz-studies.com).[42]

Learning ii-V-I patterns, at one point or another, consumes much of a player's practice routine. During an interview at UCLA's Schoenberg Music Building in November 2003, alto saxophonist John Ritchie recalled learning dozens of Charlie Parker and Cannonball Adderley ii-V-Is when he first started playing jazz.

[42] To illustrate, see appendix 1.3 for a selection of ii-V-I patterns from David Liebman's bestselling study book, *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz Harmony and Melody* (1991).

> I remember my mom always asking why didn't I play something nice, why can't I play a nice tune? You see, I was always practicing my ii-Vs in every key, you know? I'd spend hours at it, learning from books or getting things off of records. I guess it didn't sound very tuneful to whoever was listening but, man! I had to build up my vocabulary. (15-11-03)

Nick Keller observed that these progressions filter out what he called the 'bluffers' (musicians who play by ear or are conversant only in the simple dominant, subdominant and tonic progressions), from knowledgeable jazz improvisers. He recalled during a rehearsal in September 2003, also in UCLA's music department building:

> I'd been playing blues stuff on my guitar, you know the usual: Hendrix, Jimmy Page, and when I started listening to jazz they were all over the place. At high school I could get away with it a bit but when I started playing seriously I knew I had to get my shit together. (21-09-03)

As soon as any young improviser begins to appreciate the lineage of great jazz musicians immortalised in recordings, s/he inevitably attempts to understand the ways in which these musicians construct seemingly spontaneous melodies, and continuously invent and reinvent melodies over the fixed confines of a 16-bar form. Later in the same interview, Keller elaborated on the ways in which he made that transition from blues and rock guitar playing to jazz and bebop:

> I had heard jazz before and I always liked the sound but it wasn't until I listened to this record with Bird [Charlie Parker] that my guitar teacher lent me that I understood what it meant to improvise. Because this CD was mostly blues, and

> a couple of tunes over 'Rhythm Changes' ['I Got Rhythm' progression], after I listened to it a bunch of times I heard Bird play some of the same licks and little ideas. I remember then my teacher, that same guy, told me to get hold of the *Omnibook* [(Parker 1978)] with all of Bird's great solos. I'd spend all my time listening and reading along at the same time. Then I realised that Bird knew what he was doing! This was not just made up stuff. He knew that when there was a blues in B♭ or something, he was going to come out with a bunch of licks that he knew sounded hip. (21-09-03)

Similarly, saxophonist Jason Goldman,[43] with whom I spoke outside the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music in between rehearsals for the university ensemble in December 2002, recalled that during his high school days in Norwalk, Connecticut, he always looked up to tenor saxophonist Mark Small's technique and skill:

> As I got older and older in high school and I was in my junior year I started trying to play like er, one of the tenor players in the band, this guy Mark Small. He started like with, playing bebop more than that, I mean he still listened to the stuff we were listening to but he was trying to do like hit more of the changes 'cause we weren't really, we didn't know...I mean I didn't know, like hitting changes, I just knew what sounds I could play and I had a good ear so I knew it could carry me through a tune. So, er, he started trying to hit the changes more and I was like 'Well maybe I'll try to do that'. So I started practicing like Bird solos and I would read through the *Omnibook* like every day and see if I could play some of those licks in my soloing. (10-12-02)

[43] See appendix 1.9 for a transcribed excerpt of this interview.

Guitarist Isaac Darche, with whom I spoke during November 2003 after one of his regular Monday night sessions at *Lunaria* in Beverly Hills, also had a similar experience:

> I knew what kind of sound I wanted to get so the best way of going about it was to listen over and over and over to people like Kenny [Burrell], Wes [Montgomery], Grant Green and other players, including horn players, who defined the language. Once I had listened to them play over blues and 'Rhythm Changes', I'd copy down particular ii-V's I liked, or turnarounds, or double-time passages, and practice them everyday in all 12 keys and then they found their way into my playing and I started to sound like them. (10-11-03)

Many of the volumes dedicated to transcribing a selection of a master's improvised solos contain a section on selected ii-V patterns (see especially David Baker's *Giants of Jazz* series).[44] In musicological discourse, Owens provides a comprehensive analysis of Charlie Parker's solos in order to elucidate his style and the foundations for, and codification of, the bebop idiom (1974). Parker's style is characterised by a personal repertoire of melodic formulae. According to Owens, figures repeatedly occur during particular song forms such as a blues in F, a blues in A, 'A Night in Tunisia' in D minor, 'Rhythm Changes' and so on. Such coherence and consistency has provided subsequent generations of musicians with a firm basis on which to develop an idiomatic vocabulary. By listening repeatedly to particular performers' solos over recognisable progressions, the learning improviser begins to identify and isolate effective patterns over ii-V-I progressions, modulations from I-IV, turnarounds, tritone substitutions and so on.

[44] See appendix 1.4 for a sample page from Baker's volume entitled *The Jazz Style of John Coltrane* (1980), which contains over 200 isolated examples.

Like many beginning improvisers, Jason Goldman was rudely awakened to the realities of improvisation. During our interview at USC, he evoked this familiar reality check in the lives of improvising musicians:

> So, and then when I got into freshman year at college and all these other cats, you know, they would invite me to jam sessions and I hardly knew any tunes, and that was when I had to kind of step back and go 'hoooh, shit man I need to really start to understand this' and I'd go see live jazz as much as possible and try and understand this and I'd start practising and I'd go to jam sessions and try to copy and emulate what other cats were doing 'cause I thought it was so intriguing that you know you see the better musicians and they start to play stuff and you're like 'Man! That's a lot better than what I'm playing'. I'm playing just easy stuff they're playing like intricate stuff and they're, at the time I didn't know what it was called, but they were making the changes, you know, and I'm, like, 'Man! What are they doing that I'm not doing?'. So I had to go through that whole process...of...of trying to figure out how to play the music. (10-12-02)

Later on in our discussion, Goldman stressed the importance of transcribing solos in the development of his own improvisatory style:

> You know, umm...You know I didn't have, I mean I had a good ear, I've always had a good ear, but I didn't start really getting it until all of a sudden I was like 'I have to get it. I have to practice. I have to figure out what these cats...' 'How do I make changes?'...Well, it takes you, it takes time, of sitting there transcribing and playing through things slowly and figuring out *how* someone does something. Well, then you know why is that called making the changes. (10-12-02)

He explained that in the beginning stages he would select exemplary performers in the jazz tradition in an attempt to grasp the jazz language in a clear, straightforward manner:

> Ummm...the first cat I was, you know when I've first got out here I started getting into Hank Mobley, whose like probably your most basic, swinging, real vocablulary-esque player, and I started transcribing some of his stuff 'cause it was easy and I could make sense of it all and it was melodic. So I would at the start listening to you know like a two-five, you know and it'd be like um (sings)...and I'd be like 'OK, well that's over a two five' because I'd count the changes, the number of bars in the er, in the blues and I'd be like 'OK. Well where does this line fall? OK, well it falls over the, the ninth and tenth bars of the blues. Let me write that down and write the changes over it and then I'll compare the, I'll compare the changes with the line that I just, that he just played over it'. And I'm looking at it, and, and you know it's always been taught, you know Berklee I learned this, that 7s move to 3rds from minor to dominant and er, but I never really got it for some reason like. I mean I kinda knew it, I and I knew it by sound but I never really knew what I was doing. You know, sometimes I'd get lucky and play the changes but, and lots, most of the time I wouldn't. And then finally I was like 'Man! OK, let me, let me get this' so I started practicing, you know moving 7 to 3rd all the time. The 7 on the end of 4 to the 3rd on the downbeat of the dominant chord and I would take that 3rd and I'd resolve to a 3rd on the major chord. And, er from that it would, I would start copying other people's lines. Like I did Hank Mobley, 'Trane [John Coltrane] of course: 'Trane was the perfect example in his early days of like playing straight ahead vocabulary. You know, he could just do it double the speed of everybody else could... (10-12-02)

Acquiring and enriching one's vocabulary is an ongoing task, and as a player matures and develops his or her experience, new demands arise and the levels of

sophistication ascend. Moreover, since the language is inherently social, the community inflicts a degree of pressure on developing a 'hip' or modern vocabulary in order to gain social prestige. Again, Jason Goldman recalled his beginning and intermediate stages of coming to grips with the language of jazz:

> That was the process, and eventually I started to get into more modern players. 'OK well how does their two-five fit over that two-five that I used to play?' Same kind of thing only different sounds and different possibilities, different ways of, of thinking. (10-12-02)

Analysing progressions

During my time in Los Angeles, I worked with a number of ensembles and combos in which students were working towards performance credits for the UCLA jazz performance degree. On many occasions I would simply observe and record the three-hour rehearsals, while on others I would talk with the musicians during breaks, join in on group discussions and even join in with the playing itself.[45]

The combo in which I was a member was directed by the head of the jazz program and legendary guitarist, Kenny Burrell. During these sessions I became interested in exploring the vocabulary people use during their solos and the ways in which they developed their vocabulary through recordings, transcriptions and textbooks. I chose to address five progressions which most clearly highlight the ways in which patterns can be learned in order to explicate the systematic and structural ways in which improvisers approach new progressions: Miles Davis' 'Tune Up' and 'Solar', Warren and Gordon's 'There Will Never Be Another You', Jerome Kern's

[45] I was a member of one particular ensemble with guitarist Nick Keller, saxophonist and flautist Michael Sheriden, bassist Darnell Jones, drummer Michael Moreno, and pianist Grant Peters.

'All The Things You Are' and John Coltrane's 'Giant Steps'.[46] These progressions are an essential part of any jazz musician's repertoire. Saxophonist Ian Vo discussed their significance during a break in one of his ensemble sessions in October 2003:

> 'Tune Up' is one of those tunes always called up at jam sessions. It's a good set of changes to learn since it goes through the ii-Vs in a few keys. Lots of tunes have this progression and it's a great way to sort out your chops over ii-Vs 'cause it's a fairly quick tempo...I always say that if you learn 'All The Things You Are' you're really on your way to playing over changes. It really goes around a lot of ii-Vs and ends up in unrelated keys. There's no way you can just use your ear over 'All The Things You Are'. Most people these days play it up-tempo, although it's supposed to be a ballad and it can really stretch you...I never thought I'd be able to play 'Giant Steps' but I really did some shedding on it and learned some phrases that would go over all the changes. You've got to think differently over 'Giant Steps'; it's not like playing the blues, or 'Rhythm Changes'; you can't really play motivic stuff, it's really about making the changes: you just have to learn what to play over it because it is so vertical. It's about body memory really, getting your fingers in the right place at a high tempo. It's a great feeling when you get it under control.[47] (03-10-03)

Miles Davis' 'Tune Up' is representative of a jazz standard which has become a staple of jazz jam session fare and is an excellent vehicle in which to either work out or show off phrases that may have been learned in the woodshed. The progression is straightforward since it revolves around three ii-V-I progressions descending in major 3rds (D major, C major and B♭ major):

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[46] For the purposes of this discussion I shall pay particular attention to the changes over 'Tune Up', 'There Will Never Be Another You' and 'Giant Steps'.

[47] Sudnow's *Ways of the Hand* (1978) adroitly documents the bodily engagement in jazz improvisation and argues that the skill of jazz improvisation is primarily attained via kinaesthetic means.

Figure 1.11 'Tune Up'

Em7 | A7 | Dmaj7 | Dmaj7 |

| Dm7 | G7 | Cmaj7 | Cmaj7 |

| Cm | F7 | B♭maj7 | B♭maj7 |

| Em7 | F7 | B♭maj7 | A7 |

A number of different players indicated to me that, after having grasped the harmonic outline of the progression – first by learning the melody, then by arpeggiating chords in each bar, or playing cells (four-note simple diatonic patterns), and then by playing chord tones and voice leading, or resolving flattened 7ths to 3rds in order to *sound* like a good jazz musician – it was essential to copy some phrases inscribed through recordings and transcriptions. On one of our numerous sessions in the practice rooms at UCLA, this time in March 2003, John Ritchie suggested to me that this is:

> ...pretty much an academic exercise at first, you know? It's math. You've got to work out a handful of good phrases and whenever you see the progression come then you play it. After a while, you'll just play it without thinking coz you'll hear it as part of the tune and it'll make sense. At the beginning though you'll find yourself playing the same phrase every time you play. I remember when I first started playing 'Tune Up' I'd always play those opening bars that Sonny Rollins plays, you know (sings). I couldn't help it you know, it just went there. But then I realised I've got to develop new things to play so I listened to more people and got more ideas and then started getting into more complex stuff. But it's all related: if you think about it like a chart...with each phrase like on a separate line but all relating the same chord or ii-V...and they just get

> more and more complex, but it's the same idea at the root of it. It's a structure, a way of composing I guess. That's the way I learn how to play a whole load of different ideas. When I play 'Tune Up' now I can dig deep into my resources and pull up a load of different things to play from, from my own store of licks, and now that my ears are better I can choose what sounds great at the right time. (04-03-03)

Players develop a systematic approach to understanding chord progressions in which they synthesise well-used phrases that can be combined and recombined through a ii-V-I based progression such as in 'Tune Up'.[48]

These learned and pre-composed phrases provide an effective medium through which to negotiate chord changes, especially those which have a high density of different chords or a fast harmonic tempo. Berliner refers to such phrases as a 'storehouse' of devices used as a means to provide some breathing space from a 'soloist's most salient experiences in the heat of performance [which] involve poetic leaps of imagination to phrases that are unrelated, or only minimally related, to the storehouse' (1994: 216-217).

The chord-scale approach

Successful improvisation requires an understanding of the internals and implications of a chord sequence, and the chord-scale approach has been designed to facilitate creative melodic construction and to enable a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships between chords and scale-types. Later in my discussion with John

[48] See appendix 1.5 for a model in which I illustrate the ways in which improvisers use different compositional devices in which to learn a set of changes. The model illustrates the ways in which formal, compositional devices engender an immanent sense to musical phrases and provide the basis for all successful jazz improvisation.

Ritchie, we discussed the basics of the chord-scale approach which, as a system, has developed a textual, autonomous existence apart from the performance context:

> Basically jazz improvisation used to be about the chords, you know, when you see an Am7 chord, you'd just play the main notes of that chord. A more modern approach came when people started to think in terms of scales and not just chords. You see, with chords you're limited to what you can play and just playing stuff with 3rd's and 7th's kinda sounds a bit rinky dink, you know, old fashioned. With scales though, you can get all these other notes like 9th's and 13th's that give more tension in a solo. Also, you can find, like, the different relationships between scales and that makes it easier to move smoothly between chords and make, are more, like, linear statements. It sounds more hip. Say with 'Stella by Starlight' if you just played the chords over it then it would sound dull and there would be no sense of melodic development or any interest whatsoever. With scales and modes, there are a lot more different notes to choose from and sounds and colours to explore. Basically, the idea is that for any chord there is a scale, like a parent scale, that will work over that chord. So, if you see a half diminished chord on a chart then you know that that is the 6th degree of a melodic minor scale. I guess it's all modal stuff. There are seven modes in each scale so, in C major you've got, besides C major, there's Dorian, which is Dm7, Phrygian which is a kind of sus chord which sounds kinda Spanishy, then there's Lydian which is the raised forth that Bird and Diz always played, then there's the Mixolydian which is basically the dominant 7th, then there's Aeolian which can be played over minor chords and m♭6 chords, the last mode is the Locrian mode which can be played over a half diminished chord or a m7♭5 chord. (04-03-03)

This explication only covers major scale harmony. The melodic minor scale harmony includes some of the more sophisticated sounds that characterise modern

playing. The melodic minor scale also yields some important modes which have become essential know-how for modern jazz musicians wishing to create that 'hip' post-bop sound. In jazz theory the melodic minor includes a flattened 3rd while the 6th and 7th degrees remain unaltered. This scale manifests itself into dazzling array of complex names such as the altered scale, altered dominant, super-Locrian or diminished whole-tone scale. In essence, however, it is simply a melodic minor played a semitone above the root note of the chord.[49]

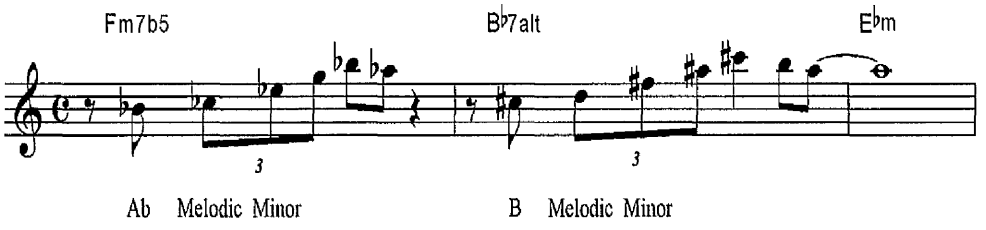
Again, it is evident that a hierarchy of complexity emerges when we consider the application of these modes to ii-V-I progressions. Over a Dm7–G7–Cmaj7, the options for the G7 chord are increased from the simple Mixolydian mode to incorporate a number of alternatives that derive from the altered scale, the Lydian dominant scale and the half/whole diminished scale. For instance, it is possible to play a diminished, altered, Lydian dominant, whole tone or Lydian augmented chord as a more sophisticated substitute for the Mixolydian mode. Over a ii-V-i progression (in the minor key) it is possible to alter the ii chord by introducing the Locrian ♯2 chord and alter the V chord with the altered, super-Locrian, diminished whole-tone. Put simply, over a ii-V-i progression in C minor, it is possible to play an

[49] In other words, an altered scale over a G7alt chord is the same as an A♭ melodic minor scale, played from G to G. Besides the melodic minor mode itself (which corresponds to a major-minor chord), this scale contains the following modes: Phrygian ♯6 or Dorian ♭2, built on the 2nd degree of the scale (in the case of the A♭ melodic minor scale this would give a B♭ Phrygian ♯6 or B♭ Dorian ♭2) which corresponds to a m7 chord or a sus♭9 chord; Lydian augmented, built on the 3rd degree of the scale (C♭ Lydian augmented) which corresponds to a maj7(♯5) chord; Lydian dominant built on the 4th degree of the scale (D♭ Lydian dominant) which corresponds to a dominant 7(♯11) chord; Lydian augmented or Mixolydian ♭6 built on the 5th degree of the scale (E♭ Lydian augmented or Mixolydian) which corresponds to a dominant 7th chord; Locrian ♯2 or half diminished built on the 6th degree of the scale (F Locrian ♯2 or half-diminished) which corresponds to a m7(♭5); and finally, the altered scale or altered dominant, super-Locrian, or diminished whole-tone mentioned above (G7alt, altered dominant, super-Locrian, diminished whole-tone) which corresponds to an 7alt chord (see appendix 1.6 for an illustration of the melodic minor scale and its related modes).

F melodic minor scale over the Dm7(♭5) chord and an A♭ melodic minor scale over the G7alt chord.

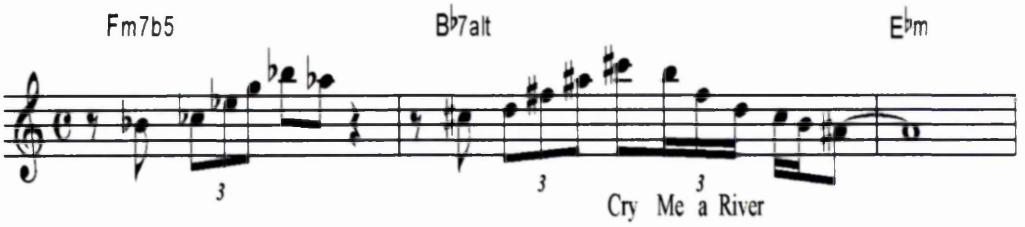
Clearly this scale and its related modes vastly open up new sonorities for the improviser, and the options of what to play over a progression become greater and more interesting. It is no longer the case that, for instance, over an Fm chord one is restricted to simply playing an arpeggio of that chord. Thinking in terms of A♭ melodic minor, in addition to conventional harmony, enables the full extent of the chord and its harmonic and melodic implications to be realised. Here is a simple example which can be played, for instance, in the turnaround of a minor blues sequence:

Figure 1.12 Altered phrases



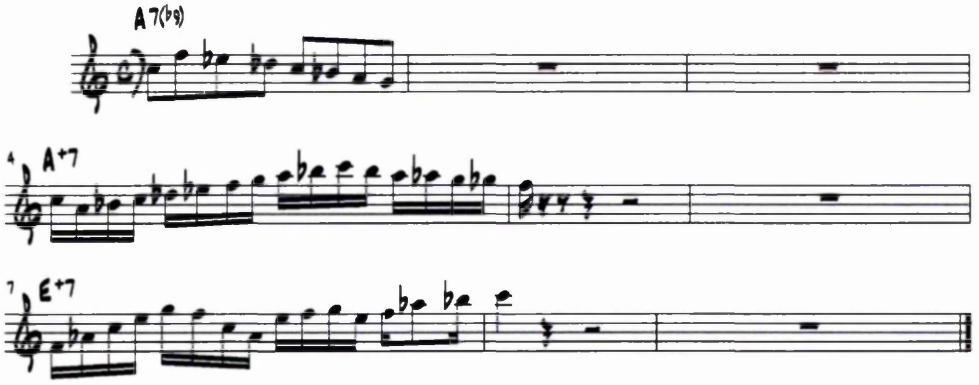
Many will have noticed that the altered scale built on the melodic minor scale becomes the basis for the 'Cry Me a River' phrase discussed and outlined above. This phrase can be applied in many different contexts, but is particularly effective over an altered chord where the phrase begins on the augmented 9th of the dominant 7th chord. In other words, in the example above, a descending 'Cry Me a River' phrase on C♯ could be played to complement the ascending B melodic minor arpeggio, since this arpeggio reaches the augmented 9th of B♭7. This is how it would look:

Figure 1.13 'Cry Me a River'



To illustrate further the use of altered scales deriving from the melodic minor, consider these isolated examples (shown in figure 1.14) of the super-Locrian or dominant altered scale in the style of Michael Brecker:

Figure 1.14 Super-Locrian phrases in the style of Michael Brecker (Steinel 1995: 156)



Another common option in a minor ii-V-i progression is to play the half-whole diminished scale which contains the following tones: 1, ♭9, ♯9, 3, ♯11, 5, 13, ♭7. This eight-note scale has a symmetrical structure and offers similar harmonic functions as the altered scale. Both scales provide the raised and lowered 9ths. However, only the half/whole diminished scale contains a 13th while the altered scale provides both the raised and lowered 5ths. The half-whole diminished scale can be

played over the entire ii-V-i minor progression and evokes the following altered sound: Dm7(♭5), G13(♭9), Cmin7. The scale can also substitute a V13(♭9) (dominant) chord in an altered ii-V-I context. This scale is also useful to achieve a 'post-bop' style since it produces a very angular sound and can be played over static harmonies such as the blues and funk vamps.

The internal symmetry of altered scales provides the ability to make endless sequences and mathematically formulaic patterns characteristic of the pervasive post-bop vocabulary. This scale can immediately express an altered sound over a variety of harmonic contexts (C7, C7(♭5), C13, C7(♯9), C7(♭9), C7(♭5♯9), C7(♭5♭9), C7(♭9♯9), C13(♭9), C13(♯9)). The internal symmetry of the scale enables any pattern constructed upon it to be transposed up or down a minor 3rd while still maintaining its structure and sound.

When Jason Goldman came to understand the principles of the chord-scale approach and in particular the modes of the melodic minor I have just outlined, it came as a kind of 'eureka' moment. He related this experience to me in an interview at USC in December 2002:

> I'd be playing mostly like arpeggios and the bebop scale. I understood the diminished scale and used that a bit to add a bit of colour to my playing. When I got to Berklee I began hearing other cats in the practice rooms and I was like 'Man! What's *that*?' They were playing bad stuff, you know, really rich and sophisticated sounds and intervals that just blew all the stuff I'd been playing away. Man I sounded so simple and kinda thin sounding, you know? I mean they sounded modern, like, you know, Brecker and Branford [Marsalis] and all

these kinda cats...Kenny Garrett. Totally different. I'd try and pick up the kinda thing that they were playing but it would always just slip away from me, you know, like a wet fish! It just wasn't like the kinda tonal 3rd's and 7th's and 9th stuff that I was playing...When they'd get up at a jam session and play over a standard or a blues they'd have this unbelievable range and big pool of ideas to play off of with these big intervals and patterns all over their horn...Soon enough I was introduced to the modes and the melodic minor scale and it just opened this world up to me. I began to think differently about changes and scales and stuff and I was like 'Man! I can hear what these guys are playing!'. The theory is pretty straightforward, you know. They told me to just think of the melodic minor and find out where that fits in terms of the chord you're playing. So for instance if you've got a m7(♭5) chord you can play something using a melodic minor scale that starts a minor 3rd over the chord in the chart then over the V chord just play the melodic minor a half-step above then just play the ordinary minor chord over the one. It's amazing that kinda modern sound you get all because of the altered tones that you get when you put the different melodic minor scales to work...So that scale gave me another kinda compositional tool to play with. (10-12-02)

I asked whether it was necessary to understand these principles intellectually or whether it is possible to decipher them from listening and experimenting with colours:

Well this is always the problem. As soon as people start theorising and make up these formulas, cats stop listening. Me personally, once I've learned the theory I have to relate it to the records. You know, see how cats have done it in the past. They don't just, like, stick to the rules, they play what sounds good for them at the time. But, it's true people are thinking about these things like too intellectually and you can tell when people just start playing like exercises for

> the melodic minor scale and play them over an altered chord a half-step up. That doesn't tell you anything and it doesn't show that you've learned anything...I mean it was great for me to suddenly realise what was behind all those great sounds that I was hearing cats play but I didn't necessarily *rely* on all these diagrams and charts and exercises up and down my horn. You can always tell whether or not a cat is *listening* when they play. It's so important to play with your ear and hear what you're going to play rather than think it. You've gotta have a good ear. (10-12-02)

Pentatonics and fourths

One of the other principal melodic vehicles enabling a performer to develop these scales is via pentatonic scales and quartal harmony. These two melodic principles enable the improviser to introduce a mixed range of 'outside' harmonies within a chord. The superimposition of patterns and melodic material derived from the pentatonic scale highlights colourful chord tones which constitute the contemporary jazz vocabulary. Pentatonic patterns are particularly popular since they can be created and learned according to digital patterns. Coltrane, in particular, was fond of ascending through the pentatonic scales, often slipping in and out of the harmony through a 1235 digital pattern which lends itself to numerous combinations according to a mathematical principle.[50]

[50] In early jazz and swing styles the pentatonic was popular since it clearly outlined a chord and had a number of inherently strong melodic options. The solo style of tenor saxophonist Lester Young is characterised by his use of pentatonics. Since pentatonics sounded diatonic and lacked chromaticism, they were largely ignored by the bebop musicians who sought to incorporate altered sounds and angular, awkward melodies. Furthermore, bebop musicians were more concerned with the horizontal aspects of harmonic improvisation and were less concerned with bold melodic statements. However, in the 1960s, as modal improvisation developed, the pentatonic made a return with Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, Woody Shaw, Freddie Hubbard and others. Their style, in many senses, set the precedent for modern jazz improvisation. Pentatonic scales served a similar purpose to modes and enabled improvisers to pursue a linear concept of improvisation. Within relatively static harmonies, pentatonics could be altered and transposed producing unsettling dissonances and unexpected melodic colours.

Pentatonics yield the same array of manifestations as the major and melodic minor modes, and the improviser is required to understand the different altered, Lydian, melodic minor, etc. variations of the pentatonic scale and their application within harmonic contexts. The pentatonic can also be used in harmonic generalisation and one will often hear soloists performing sequences of note-groupings derived from the pentatonic scale. Such a sequential approach enables the improviser to consider the melodic (and mathematical) implications of playing outside the chord.[51]

Back in London, I spoke with saxophonist Tom Crawley, who had just graduated from Berklee School of Music in Boston. We met up in my flat in May 2003, and he explained how superimposing pentatonics from different keys is a 'great way to sound hip'. Crawley explained how Coltrane introduced this concept:

> Let's say if you wanted to superimpose something on D♭ (or C♯) minor, you could superimpose an E minor pentatonic (E, G, A, B, D, E), up a minor 3rd. Or you could do a pattern utilising minor 3rds. You could do a D♭ minor pentatonic, an E minor pentatonic, a G minor pentatonic, and a B♭ minor pentatonic, back to D♭ minor pentatonic, up in minor 3rds. A real common one, and this is one that you hear Coltrane do would be D♭ minor pentatonic, then E minor pentatonic, then down a whole step to D minor pentatonic, then slide a half-step down back to D♭ minor pentatonic. What you have to realise is that all this time the bass is not going anywhere. The bass stays on D♭m7. (16-05-03)

For a good example of this, he told me to listen to McCoy Tyner:

[51] See appendix 1.7 for examples.

> McCoy Tyner is the four-note group master and very pentatonic related. Listen to *The Real McCoy*, especially his solo on *Blues on the Corner*, I transcribed some of that...it uses a lot of that sort of material and it definitely isn't cheesy. All that stuff that Brecker does is just taken from McCoy and 'Trane, so I say you should take it from McCoy and 'Trane yourself. (16-05-03)

Fourths

Quartal harmony or fourths playing is structurally similar to pentatonic improvisation and represents a nod towards modern twentieth-century composers, in particular towards Bartók, Hindemith and Stravinsky.[52] A phrase commonly used over static harmony is illustrated below. It is based on the stacking of fourths over the root notes of a diminished chord:

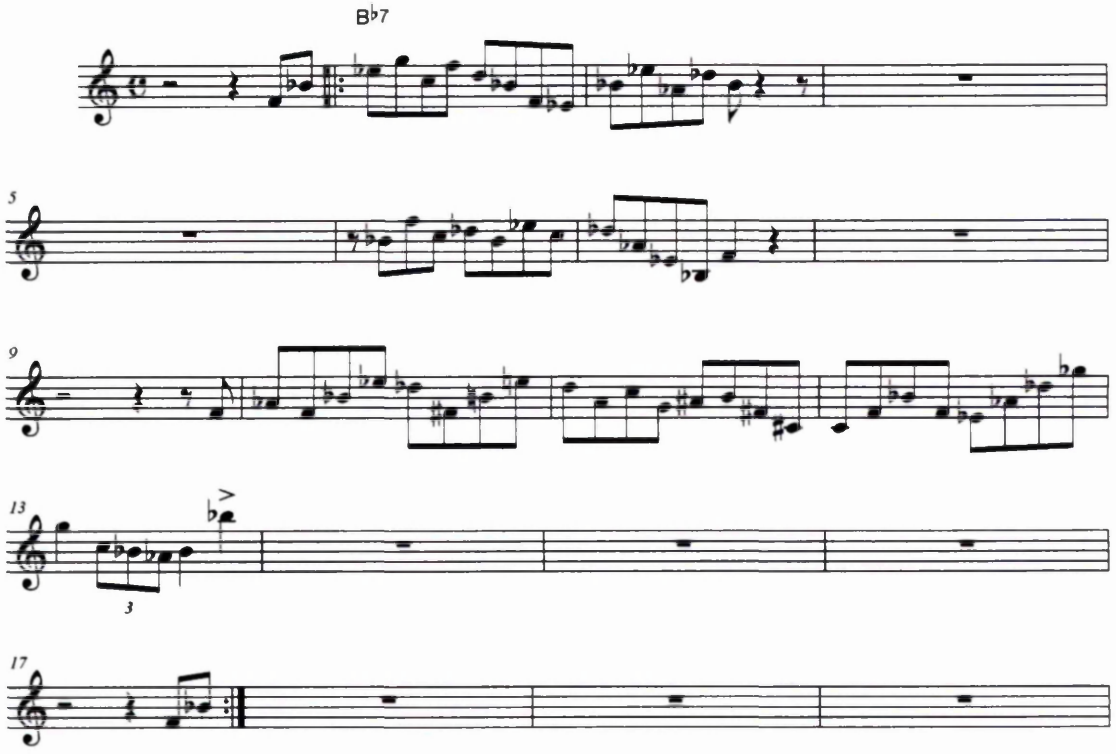
Figure 1.15 Fourths

Playing fourths enables the musician to extend harmony even further by superimposing the harmonic qualities associated with the interval of the fourth. Entire textbooks have been written geared towards developing these techniques (see Ricker 1976 and Bergonzi 1980 especially). Eddie Harris' 'Freedom Jazz Dance'

[52] This clearly follows the 'catch-up' tendency in a formalist jazz aesthetic in which ideas developed in Western art music are appropriated to generate a 'modern sound'. This reinforces the claim, made below, that classical traditions, intramusical meaning and the ideal of absolute music still appear to have a stranglehold on contemporary jazz practice and aesthetics. Apocrypha tells us that Charlie Parker was a huge fan of both Stravinsky and Bartók, and there is reputed to be an occasion at which the former attended a concert of Parker's during which, on one of Parker's double time improvisations, he quoted a passage from the *Firebird Suite* to which Stravinsky leapt onto his feet and proclaimed Bird a genius.

(1965) (see figure 1.16), which is based on just one 7th chord but nonetheless moves outside that harmony via fourths, has provided the basis for many excursions, and I have heard countless musicians quote portions of it.

Figure 1.16 'Freedom Jazz Dance'
'Freedom Jazz Dance' by Eddie Harris. Miles Davis Quintet. (*Miles Smiles*. Columbia PC 9401. Recorded New York, NY, 1966.)



Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated some of the ways in which idiomatic elements of the jazz language are learned, and have identified that the methodological and practical applications of these vocabulary items follow a structural, compositional-like framework. I have illustrated the extent to which performers reflect upon and discuss the immanent designs of their solos when recognising the musical logic and continuity that engenders a unified jazz style. An exposition of these elements in turn provides the basis upon which to develop the main thesis of this dissertation: to what extent is analytical precision linked with ontological testimony in jazz improvisation?

In short, I intend to illustrate the converging perspectives concerning these structural representations of jazz. On the one hand, these compositional models represent, according to Ake (2002), the emergence of a 'generation of players who have been taught to esteem virtuosic displays of...arcane constructions' (Ake 2002: 134). Furthermore, it is via the estimation of such compositional constructions that 'a narrative [that] supports a discourse of complexity and the legend of the jazz musician as a solitary hero [emerges], reinforcing an already prevalent "practice-room aesthetic" in the academy'.[53] Indeed this myth is perpetuated by the reams of pages currently devoted to learning the craft of jazz improvisation and, more specifically, the ways in which to 'hip up your playing' according to the sophisticated structural devices I have illustrated above. Consider, as a final example, the topics outlined in the contents page to a recent book aimed at guitarists, *Complete Book of Jazz Guitar Lines & Phrases* by Sid Jacobs:

> Introduction; The Craft; More Diatonic Sequences; Smokin' A Half Note (Etude); Idioms; Idiomatic ii or ii-V Shapes; Idiomatic V-I Resolution Shapes; Idiomatic I Major Shapes; Sample II or II-V Shapes; Sample II-V-I Lines; Some Additional Notes on the Idioms; Some Miscellaneous Bebop Style Phrases; Major Seventh Lines; Miscellaneous Phrases Over Common Progressions; Another Blues in F (Etude); May the Fourths Be With You; Triads (Fourth Triads); The Pentatonic Scale & Fourths; Some Pentatonic Fourth Shapes; Fourths Contours and Permutations; Pentatonic Scales; Pentatonics Inside Out; The Madness -- The Method; Ideas & Examples Combining Pentatonic Sounds; Diatonic Fourths & Fifths; Fourths & Intervallic Sequences; Piccardy Fourths

[53] Contrast this with Turino's (1993) anecdote. When he mentioned to a respected Peruvian musician that a fellow North American was 'practicing' by himself, his response was 'What would he want to do that for?' (1993: 58). Practice is very central to the musicking of a formalist aesthetic in which fidelity to the score is valued higher than performativity.

(Etude); Quartal Harmony; Symmetrical Scales; The 'Magic Scale' (Augmented); Major Triads from the Augmented Scale; Minor Triads from the Augmented ('Magic') Scale; Some Augmented Scale Harmonies; The Diminished Scale; Some Diminished Scale Melodic Patterns; Diminished Scale Harmony; Whole Tone Scale; Whole Tone Scale Fingerings; Some Whole Tone Lines; The Chromatic Scale; Octave Displacement; Polychords & Slash Chords. (2003: 1)

An alternative perspective considers the symbolic value that these compositional constructions have engendered. However, this perspective can only be developed in terms of a dialectical model in which the immanent structures of composition are dialectically related to the temporal exigencies of our human experience, and the unique mode of presentation improvisation affords. The next chapter penetrates the heart of a vociferous critique which attempts to deconstruct the arcane constructions inherent in improvisation and reveal the machinations of the ideological distortion.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Discursive Construction of the Jazz Language

Introduction

Having illustrated and described some of the principal ways in which jazz's idiomatic language is learned, I now offer a range of interpretations that seek to understand the symbolic and cultural significance of this language and its representation in both musicology and pedagogy.

The first perspective embraces an approach that has characterised what is often referred to as post-structuralism. This approach, developed in literary criticism and continental philosophy, initially sought to expose the power structures inherent in classical canons of literature and thought. Among others, Foucault (1972) and Derrida (1967) offered a critique of Western humanism and metaphysics on the grounds that our subjectivities are the result of discursive constructions based on concealment or exclusion, rather than autonomous, individual and free entities. Derrida writes succinctly that:

> To 'deconstruct' philosophy is thus to work through the structured genealogy of its concepts in the most scrupulous and immanent fashion, but at the same time to determine, from a certain external perspective that it cannot name or describe, what this history may have concealed or excluded, constituting itself as history through this repression in which it has a stake. (Derrida 1981: 6)

And Foucault states that:

> Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general

> behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms, which, at once, impose and maintain them. (Foucault 1977: 200)

According to this perspective, discourses – the structured genealogies of concepts manifested in literature, architecture, town planning, factories and prisons, for example – are associated with power and repression. Deconstruction seeks to expose those rhetorical devices that serve the foundations of a cultural text's and practice's reproduction of ideological power structures. One possible interpretation of the formalist representation of the jazz language, as a structured genealogy of concepts embodied in compositional structures, can follow these lines. Consider this statement made during an interview with John Ritchie in a rehearsal room at UCLA in December 2002:

> There is a danger that improvising is going to become just reiterating what is valued in the tradition and who's to say what that tradition is? Where's our control over our creativity? When do we stop improvising and just play what is expected of us? (03-12-02)

Many other jazz musicians I spoke with expressed words of warning in relation to the vast array of pre-composed jazz patterns and formulae in circulation, and offered their reservations on the academicisation process in jazz more generally. Musicians such as John Ritchie, quoted above, complained that these litanies stifled creativity by compelling musicians to reproduce pre-composed phrases in order to satisfy the recommendations for authentic improvisation. This in turn relates to a complex process of canonisation in which particularly erudite 'works' are valued over others.

The issue at stake is the relationship between individual utterances of the jazz language and broader issues of hegemonic discourse and representation. Because deconstruction is never concerned only with signified content but with the conditions and assumptions of discourse and frameworks of enquiry, 'it engages the institutional structures governing our practices, competencies, [and] performances' (Culler 1982: 156).

Thus, among musical deconstructivists there is a concern that a formalist style of representation, illustrated in the previous chapter, embodies discourses which form us as subjects, govern our practices, competencies and performances, and force us to reproduce hegemonic norms. Far from being transcendental and free, our subjectivities and, by extension, our improvisations, are socially conditioned: they reiterate power structures. The relationship between improvisation and the idiomatic language, sedimented in the jazz tradition, becomes a pernicious one in which hegemonic ideologies constrain any ability to create meaning.

One of the most remarkable musicological examples of a formalist understanding of jazz improvisation can be found in Schuller's study of Sonny Rollins' 'Blue Seven'. Schuller's emphasis on improvisation's value and objectivity residing in the immanent structures of form and coherence[54] has generated a vociferous response from the post-strucutralist, so-called 'New Musicologists'. In such studies, behind claims of objectivity lurks, Gary Tomlinson argues, an internalist ideology and the conceit of absolute music which he defines as:

[54] Schuller describes Rollins' 'crowning achievement' in the solo accordingly: 'Such structural cohesiveness – without sacrificing expressiveness and rhythmic drive or swing – one has come to expect from the composer who spends days or weeks writing a given passage. It is another matter to achieve this in an on-the-spur-of-the-moment extemporization' (1958: 8).

> [T]he absurd but hard-to-eradicate proposition that music alone, independent of the cultural matrices that individuals build around it, can *mean* – that a recording or transcription of a Charlie Parker solo, for example, or the score of a Beethoven symphony, can convey *something* even in the hypothetical absence of the complex negotiations of meaning we each pursue with them. This is the internalist ideology that has led most writers on jazz...to seek its 'essence' primarily or exclusively in its musical features. (Tomlinson 1991: 247)

Understanding music's meaning: practice theory

The enigma of music's non-representative status has, in general, engendered a division between a those who seek an intra-musical meaning and those who look beyond the music itself to an extra-musical meaning either within the realm of feeling and affect or within the realm of culture. The formalist perspective deciphers music's meaning within its immanent structures; a socio-cultural explanation, by contrast, seeks music's meaning within the cultural matrices of its construction and maintenance. One of the ways in which these cultural matrices can be understood is through paradigms borrowed from the social sciences. One of these paradigms, referred to as 'practice theory', seeks to identify the ways in which social actors 'manipulate, interpret, legitimise, and reproduce the patterns...that order their world' (Collier and Rosaldo as cited in Ortner 1994: 389) and provides a possible model in which to understand the relationship between analytical forms and cultural meaning.

Practice theory can help us to understand the ways in which jazz's symbolic language engenders power relationships, and to explore the effects of hegemonic discourse on improvisatory practices. Thus, we can move beyond simply understanding improvised music's formal, structural attributes, and consider instead

the ways in which musical forms engender social relationships and are dependent on cultural matrices. Rather than simply accepting *sui generis* that there are compositional devices employed in improvisation, in order to understand its meaningfulness we must interrogate the ways in which these devices are implicated in cultural reproduction. Robert Walser suggests that 'musical meanings are always grounded socially and historically, and they operate on an ideological field of conflicting interests, institutions and memories' (1993: 29). This understanding of music's meaning calls for a discursive and practice-based mode of musical analysis, for 'if this makes [musical meanings] extremely difficult to analyse, it does so by forcing analysis to confront the complexity and antagonism of culture' (Walser 1993: 29).

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977) deftly examines these hegemonic constraints and the consequences of institutional violence on cultural practices. He provides a template with which we can understand the ways in which the notions of talent, virtuosity, canonicity, legitimacy and authenticity are inscribed on the symbolic language and cultural practices of young jazz musicians outlined in the previous chapter. As Walser asserts, musical details and structures 'are intelligible only as traces, provocations, and enactments of power relationships' (1993: 30). My first thesis enquires into the extent to which the structures I outlined in the previous chapter – structures which were referred to by Ake as 'arcane constructions' (2002: 134) – are the lineaments of power relationships.

Symbolic power in cultural production

Situated within the context of fellow musicians and audience members at the jam session, there is an economy of musical signs and symbols that forces the improviser to strategically utilise a particular selection of them for maximum effect. The desire to please at best and to show off at worst is a common experience admitted to by many musicians I have spoken with. During a short conversation with New York-based tenor saxophonist Mark Small in October 2002 at the Thelonius Monk Institute of Jazz Performance, he admitted that 'I have felt the need to impress at a jam session but I try with everything to overcome this attitude. This feeling is precisely why it is so rare to actually hear anyone communicating with each other at a jam session' (15-10-02). He was critical of the way in which musicians use particular techniques in order to maximise their musical output:

> A good deal of people seem to be impressed with chops [technique] at public jam sessions. People get a limited time to hear what someone has to play and there are so many people to be heard that it seems people's tolerance to actually listen lowers their standards to the point that they will only listen to someone if that person demonstrates the equivalent of a car crash in an action movie. The simplest way to create that kind of energy is the old ploy of faster-louder. (15-10-02)

In response to a question about the value of 'chops' at jam sessions, Chris Baker, a New York trumpet player whom I met in New York at *Smalls* in November 2002, concurred: 'Lot's [of value], because the highest, loudest and fastest wins. Right?' (10-11-02). Tenor saxophonist Frank Kozyra expressed similar views in an email:

> I think it is more important to make a really great musical statement in sessions (and always for that matter). Some guys focus on chops, some focus on developing ideas, others on rhythm. Again, I think there are the younger players who want to blaze through every tune and show off what they can do with their technique, while the older guys look for overall musicality. (email correspondence 25-10-02)

Chris Baker explained to me that 'a lot of all this hip stuff comes from schools teaching improvisation and tunes with all these guidelines and formulas' (10-11-02), and teacher and guitarist Bob Russell, whom I contacted via email in December 2002, similarly reflected on some of his experiences:

> Yes, I do agree that through the need to impress, the scale-and-sequence-based approach to improvisation has spawned some very impressive instrumental technicians; when you're not waiting to hear lines, you can run off quite a bunch of notes! Of course, it's important to have facility on your instrument; you must be able to get to your ideas without impediment. I tend to allow for maturity when I'm listening to someone play...most guys are generally going to be a bit over concerned with chops. (email correspondence 12-12-02)

During our conversation at the *Village Vanguard* during my visit to New York in November 2002, Mark Small compared the context of the jam session with that of being among friends. In this context, he feels it easier to narrate a story or have a conversation:

> It's the same as going to a function where you're with people you don't know and they ask you questions and you'd like them to be impressed by your

> answers, if you worry about that you'll either look pompous or nervous or worse. When you go to the pub with friends, you don't need to impress, you just act yourself. (08-11-02)

He later reasserted this idea in the context of playing jazz:

> Again, if you jam at someone's house in a more private setting, people are more apt to listen to what you actually have to say and chops won't necessarily be a judgment factor. (08-11-02)

However, Small believed there was a tendency, indeed a pressure, to develop a musical vocabulary that engenders cultural cachet within the jazz community:

> I do personally feel that people today are trying to be hip instead of trying to sing through the horn. I find that the level of patience is getting smaller and smaller, this applies to me sometimes, for the player who takes his time and really develops a melody. If it doesn't immediately shock, it tends to get dismissed. (08-11-02)

These comments and observations link with Bourdieu's theory of practice. Within this general theory, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital in cultural production illustrates the ways in which most privileged groups in society are distinguished by their possession not only of economic capital, but also of social and symbolic capital. Bourdieu suggests that cultural practices are composed of transaction strategies in which aesthetic forms are seen as symbols for, and of, prestige (1977: 171-183). In Los Angeles, I explored the ways in which, via canonical representations and pedagogical institutions, symbolic capital is generated

and accumulated through particular uses of the jazz language – illustrated in the previous chapter in terms of a hierarchy of complexity – and also the ways in which institutions maintain control over the discourses that determine musical styles.[55]

Ian Vo, during an interview in October 2003, alluded to this symbolic quality of the jazz language and its ability to express a particular social status within the community:

> Belonging to this jazz community means that you've got to speak the language, right? But there's also this thing where you have to know the right things to say, the cool things. You've gotta listen out at gigs, new recordings and check out other people's playing and know what's hip. Every so often I refresh my vocabulary with cool things to say. (03-10-03)

Pianist Dan Grieman, who had just enrolled at USC and met me for lunch in the cafeteria in September 2003, identified a paradox between the ideal of improvisation and the social reality of the practice:

> There's this big contradiction in a lot of people around these days. It's like everyone wants to say their own thing and have this real distinctive voice but also everyone's learning all the same things and the same hip patterns, Coltrane stuff, that pentatonic stuff Woody Shaw does, the McCoy Tyner comping and Brecker especially. Man, everyone sheds with Brecker to sound modern, get that modern sound, you know? There's even books people have shown me that

[55] The idea that language engenders power relations is a common theme in sociolinguistics. It is useful to consider the transferability of this idea to the language of jazz improvisation. Holland (et al.) notices that 'one's choices of dialect, register, pronouns, and genre are not socially neutral. Such decisions partake of powerful systems that index claims to the social relationships between speaker and hearer and to the speaker's general social position' (Holland et al. 1998: 126-127). See also Duranti (1997), Hymes (1974) and Rossi-Landi (1973).

say *The Fastest Way to Hip Up Your Playing*. But you listen to these cats like Miles and even Brecker and they swung, they had something to say in their own way and they were telling stories. Somehow it's like somebody else is deciding what's good and everybody's copying them and not thinking for themselves. People are worried about how others will judge them in a jam session. They're up there thinking they're getting graded on their solo. (29-09-03)

I regularly attended jam sessions at *Jax Bar and Grill* in Glendale on a Sunday night and would chat with the musicians there. In February 2003 I went along with Nick Keller, and he recalled a particular jam session:

I remember one time when I was playing here once and there was this piano player, a guy who I swear had these five licks using sequence stuff on chromatic fourths and all of that and he didn't have anything else and these phrases sounded so awkward. He'd obviously rehearsed these hip licks before he came on down. Maybe he heard them the week before and asked a guy to write them down or tell him where they were from...There's tons of books now that have these like extracts, they're hip modern phrases that they say work over like a Cmin7 chord or something. But hey, no one listens to them in context. It sounded so stupid, man. I reckon the guys that wrote these books must've sounded terrible but that's what everybody wants to do these days. That kid wasn't listening to the band. It was like he was just quoting some cool phrase he read in a book so that he could sound intellectual, you know what I mean?...But he didn't really understand what he was saying. That's what they tell you to do in the schools and that's what they expect you to hear...I mean, I don't hear things this bad all the time, but I know that everyone has these cool things, like little virtuoso phrases that they know sound hip. But, come on! The people who really listen properly to what you're playing, you know, hear you actually *say*

> something. Those are the people who are going to ask you to play with them, they can see right through all that other crap. (16-02-03)

I asked Keller why he thought certain ways of playing have prevailed:

> I think it's because they can't teach you to be Sonny Rollins or, like, Joe Henderson. They can teach you to be Coltrane on 'Giant Steps' or...Bird 'cause they think that he had all these phrases that he would recombine like a formula. But thinking about it like this, they can't teach you how to build a solo and develop ideas and play with rhythm like Sonny Rollins does. But of course, Bird and 'Trane never played like that. (16-02-03)

After we had had lunch at USC in September 2003, Dan Grieman and I found a practice room to do some playing together. I asked him to explain what he considered was 'hip' in jazz and to identify for me the level of theoretical awareness and its application in his peers' playing. He found it difficult to talk about his own playing, since he was not comfortable in analysing it in such a way. Nevertheless, he was conscious of the preoccupation with theory and analytical precision that formed the basis for his peers' performance approach:

> It's like an obsession for some cats; they're just like math freaks. Knowing that you can shift between two pentatonics a tritone apart in a phrase in a minor blues over a G minor chord may make you sound hip but you can't go in there thinking that's what you're playing. Some cats play as if they are saying 'I'M PLAYING AN OUTSIDE PENTATONIC NOW'. They, like, learn something because they think it's hip and then they just kinda 'plug' it in. It's OK if you dig the sound and it just fits in to your playing, the colours and stuff. But that's an advanced stage of playing when you're totally comfortable with who you are.

> Some people just try harder and harder to get the hip stuff in when they can't even make a beautiful statement or a lyrical ii-V. (29-09-03)

Later, he reflected on why this attitude towards improvising has emerged:

> The way they, like, 'grade' you is to see whether you've learned all the concepts and know how to apply them. So, for instance they'll get you to play without a band. I guess that's OK if you're a piano player but for horn players it's kinda stupid. Basically they'll get you to play through a standard like 'All The Things You Are' or 'There Will Never Be Another You' and get you to only use, say, altered dominants, or they'll say, 'OK, now play that chart with pentatonics and do side-slipping'. Man! They're just asking for it there...I think there's way too much emphasis on theory and not enough on sounds. People have to think too much about what they're playing and have to clock every time they play something...sophisticated that'll earn them good grades. (29-09-03)

The idea of symbolic is especially useful for musical analysis since it embraces a wide range of meanings, including material and musical properties as well as more abstract notions such as status and authority. Sarah Thornton suggests that 'just as books and painting display cultural capital in the family, so subcultural capital is objectified in the forms of fashionable haircuts and carefully assembled record collections' (1996: 202), and embodied as 'being in the know', using the correct slang and performative behaviour. Following the comments cited above, it is possible to assert that improvisatory practices reproduce cultural hierarchies of authenticity, of belonging, of talent, and of 'hipness', and therefore are structured by the logic of symbolic capital.

One particular manifestation of this logic can be found in *The Scale Syllabus*, which lists of some of the frequently occurring chords and their associated scales, covering the categories of major, minor, dominant, diminished and half-diminished. This syllabus was devised and popularised by Jamey Aebersold's publishing empire, in particular in his *How to Play and Improvise Play-Along* series (1974-present). The syllabus appears in every one of over 100 of his ever-expanding volumes. Keeping in mind the dictum: 'anyone can improvise', he applies a highly formalist system to his syllabus that is designed as a comparative framework of reference for improvising jazz musicians.[56] He even dedicates an entire volume (26) to the syllabus, employing the well-known saxophonist David Liebman to solo over every scale listed. Liebman improvises on two versions of each scale: the first is slow and relatively simple and the second is faster and more complex. In his 'Introduction', Aebersold states that:

> Scales near the top of each category will sound mild or consonant and scale choices further down the list will become increasingly tense or dissonant. Each player is urged to start with scales at the top and with practice and experimentation gradually work his [sic] way down the list to the more dissonant or tension-producing scales. (Aebersold 2000: vi)

David Ake notes, with regard to this methodical approach, that the underlying assumption that 'students should aspire to higher degrees of dissonance as they acquire more technical control over their instrument, has affected improvisational concepts dramatically since the 1970s' (2002: 123). He suggests that, via the syllabus, students are 'encouraged to progress methodically, gradually "earning" increasingly dissonant scales' (2002: 134). Clearly, the concepts of dissonance and

[56] See appendix 1.8 for syllabus.

unfathomable complexity are associated with cultural and symbolic power. While Aebersold was a common target of abuse among the majority of my informants for his reductive methodology and systematic approach to learning jazz improvisation, the influence his approach has had on the aesthetic and symbolic values of the jazz community has become widespread.

In short, it becomes possible to posit a relationship between the formalist representations of jazz, outlined in chapter 4, and a logic of symbolic capital according to Bourdieu's sociological analysis. In focussing on analytical precision, we can begin to understand that the structures of jazz improvisation have a discursive quality in that they determine what is valued within the ideologically administered culture of jazz improvisation. In the following chapter, I attempt to understand where these values derive from and how they became ideologically distorted, by offering a brief historiography of jazz improvisation and a discussion of the process of canon formation.

CHAPTER SIX

The Canonic Construction of the Jazz Tradition

Introduction

Canons are integral in the generation and maintenance of musical cultures. Furthermore, canons establish standards of legitimacy, talent, race, authenticity and virtuosity. Canons are thus an essential component of any art form. In jazz, they consist of a body of exemplary musicians, solos and compositions that stands in the collective memory of the audience and musicians to represent the great art works or essential heritage of the cultural field. The performers of these solos or works are thought of as the most important and influential musicians in the culture of jazz.[57] The existence of this canon is expressed and reproduced in various institutional practices and discourses generated by the media, academia, publishing and the recording industry. In many regards, canons provide the resource to generate notions of authenticity and legitimacy since they signify the 'correct' and valued elements that enable membership in certain social formations. As a consequence, the formation of a canon engenders the discursive schemes that are produced and maintained by interested and powerful institutions.

Recent studies of canon formation in music have sought to reconsider which cultural groups' works have been excluded from the canon. This methodology has proved to be particularly seductive among marginalised groups with post-colonial

[57] Without wanting to risk reproducing the canonic construction of the jazz traditions, the 'great jazz musicians' often include Buddy Bolden, Jelly Roll Morton, Kid Ory, Freddie Keppard, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Chick Webb, Benny Goodman, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Art Tatum, Ella Fitzgerald, Django Reinhardt, Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, Max Roach, Bud Powell, Charlie Parker, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Rollins, Clifford Brown, Sarah Vaughan, Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Art Pepper, Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, Elvin Jones, Wayne Shorter, McCoy Tyner, Keith Jarrett, Jaco Pastorius, Ornette Coleman, Art Blakey, Horace Silver, Chick Corea, Lester Bowie, Cecil Taylor. The list, like any list, is incomplete.

literature studies and feminist deconstruction (Spivak 1988; Showalter 1986; McClary 1991). It has also proved useful for music scholars such as Leo Treitler, who sought to regenerate interest into derelict historical epochs such as the early Baroque period (Treitler 1989); Anthony Newcomb, who reassessed Schumman's *Second Symphony* (1983); Patrick McCreless, who reassessed a Schubert fantasia for inclusion in the canon (1997); Henry Kingsbury, who provided an influential critique of the institutional generation of canonic musical practice (1988); and Robert Walser, who examined heavy metal and addressed its exclusion from academic enquiry (1993). Other studies, such as Bohlman and Bergeron's edited collection *Disciplining Music* (1992), explore the cultural mechanisms that constrain and enable canon production through the evocation of particular narratives of history and predictions of the future through a range of discursive lenses.

A canon is dependent on a textual tradition. The process of canonisation of musical works and styles is not intrinsic to the music itself; it is inscribed by writing or recording. The music thus is transformed into a text and rendered into a foreign mode of representation. Furthermore, a text has to be easily identifiable; it needs to be read or listened to by a large number of consumers and interpreters. In improvisatory practices this canon formation process is at play in the generation and perpetuation of generic patterns and harmonic devices, and, through the institutionalised structure of college jazz programs and pedagogical literature, has objectified the culture of jazz improvisation and wrenched it out of its performative function. As soon as a canon is formed, so too is a concomitant value-system; this system judges the efficacy and legitimacy of a set of standards – standards which are created and generated through the newly institutionalised persona of jazz pedagogy.

John Coltrane and 'Giant Steps'

The notion of a canon in improvisation raises a paradox: a canon requires permanence whereas improvisation requires continual renewal and change. It is worth considering the ways in which the improvisations of John Coltrane, and his composition 'Giant Steps' in particular, have been rendered through discursive schemes, into canons. This discussion will shed light on this paradox and illustrate the values associated with the performance of the music of Coltrane. In the Los Angeles jazz community, and indeed in most other jazz communities across the world, the work of John Coltrane holds an immeasurable cultural importance. A combination of formidable technique, apocryphal tales surrounding his practice regime, his theoretical sophistication and his systematic use of Nicholas Slominsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* (1947), his tireless stamina and his challenging compositions and harmonic substitutions, have all contributed to his enduring position in the jazz tradition and his music's canonical status as a symbolically powerful marker of legitimacy and authenticity within the culture of jazz improvisation.

As an innovator with a seemingly inexhaustible source of creativity, Coltrane's playing essentially intensified complexity within jazz improvisation. As such, his music has become a social genre that impacts on many young players. Trumpet player Chris Baker commented that 'if you check out 'Trane, then sooner or later you're going to come across his ideas and want to experiment with them' (10-11-02). Similarly, nearly all the young Los Angeles musicians I spoke with independently stated that Coltrane is their primary source of inspiration.

Coltrane's music has taken on a life outside of his own intentions. It has been reformulated into the world of a text or canon. Bob Russell commented on this idea:

> For example, Coltrane may have played a passage in 'Mr. P.C.' that was based on the melodic minor scale. He may not have actually been thinking about the melodic minor scale at the time he played the passage; he may have simply heard a melodic design in his head which turned out to be related to the scale. In later years, someone analyses the solo and discovers that the notes in question came from the C melodic minor scale. They surmise that if they practice a variety of sequences from the same scale, they will be able to produce Coltrane-like results. Unfortunately, they are completely overlooking the wealth of experience and environment which Coltrane had to live through in order to lead him to choose those particular notes at that particular instant! He was looking for a song to sing; they are looking for a formula to exploit. (email correspondence 12-12-02)

Similarly, Mark Small explained to me in the rehearsal room at USC in October 2002, that:

> ...the reason that Coltrane and then [Michael] Brecker have become the most imitated sax players is because they play these awkward and complex phrases that take a real virtuoso to get their horn around them. I don't know why but there's an obsession with playing complex lines in jazz. There's nowhere that says you need to be complex...But now, like, it's all about sounding hip and using all these techniques and playing phrases to show that you've paid your dues and you're...authentic. (15-10-02)

In addition to these general observations about Coltrane's significance in the jazz community, the discursive significance of 'Giant Steps' among the musicians

with whom I spoke was also striking. During lunch in a courtyard refectory at UCLA in January 2003, alto saxophonist John Ritchie, on the eve of his senior recital, claimed that:

> 'Giant Steps' is like a benchmark tune that we've all got to face. There's definitely this thing saying you've got to prove yourself; you've got to show that you've got all the right chops, but that might not be the way you play. (16-01-03)

David Ake also makes the observation that:

> Just as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* has worked its way into general cultural discourse to represent any long or 'heavy' book, 'Giant Steps' has spawned a body of meanings in jazz pedagogy involving notions of virtuosity, complexity, and 'hipness'. (Ake 2002: 129)

During the late 1950s John Coltrane developed a particularly complex progression that is now often referred to as 'Coltrane changes'. Coltrane changes are characterised by their tonal movement through major 3rds. The progression to 'Giant Steps' is written below in Figure 1.17 (in concert pitch):

Figure 1.17 The harmonic design of 'Giant Steps'

| Bmaj7 D7 | Gmaj7 B♭7 | E♭maj7 | Am7 D7 |

| Gmaj7 B♭7 | E♭maj7 F♯7 | Bmaj7 | Fm7 B♭7 |

| E♭maj7 | Am7 D7 | Gmaj7 | C♯m7 F♯7 |

| Bmaj7 | Fm7 B♭7 | E♭maj7 | C♯m7 F♯7 |

Over the 16 bars, the progression is centred on three tonal centres which are a major

3rd apart: B, G and E♭. Coltrane was able to develop this idea in many ways. In particular, he used it as a substitute for an ordinary ii-V progression. To illustrate this, I refer to the progression of another of Coltrane's compositions recorded the same year: 'Countdown' (1959). This composition is loosely based on the changes to 'Tune Up'. 'Tune Up' begins with the four-bar ii-V-I progression in the key of D major:

| Em7 | A7 | Dmaj7 | Dmaj7 |

The first four bars of Countdown are:

| Em7 F7 | B♭maj7 D♭7 | G♭maj7 A7 | Dmaj7 |

Coltrane begins with the same E minor ii chord, and then modulates to the dominant 7th chord a semitone above. From there, he begins a cycle of major 3rds, modulating from the key of B♭ to G♭ and finally back to D. The next eight bars of the tune are identical harmonically, transposed down to C and B♭, respectively. The final four bars are identical to the final four bars of 'Tune Up'. The full progression for Countdown is written below in Figure 1.18:

Figure 1.18 The harmonic sequence of 'Countdown'

| Em7 F7 | B♭maj7 D♭7 | G♭maj7 A7 | Dmaj7 |

| Dm7 E♭7 | A♭maj7 B7 | Emaj7 G7 | Cmaj7 |

| Cm7 D♭7 | G♭maj7 A7 | Dmaj7 F7 | B♭maj7 |

| Em7 | F7 | B♭maj7 | E♭7 |

Soloing over Coltrane changes can be challenging since the apparent key centre changes so often. Most players are forced to develop 'ready-made' patterns which will ensure a harmonic fit during a solo and, in the process, minimise risk of 'botching up'. However, Jason Goldman, with whom I met up again in November 2003 for a drink before the *Jax* jam session, had an acerbic response to canonic valorisation of the 'Giant Steps' approach to jazz improvisation:[58]

> This thing with 'Giant Steps' as, like, a 'rite of passage', is in my opinion detrimental to the art form. I mean, it's a great example of, like, horizontal playing and it shows that 'Trane really was leagues above everyone else harmonically at that time. But, you know, the way everyone plays that tune now – it's like they're just zoning out on their own. It's got a real fast tempo and people just play long lines of eighth-notes weaving in and out of the chords, playing all these patterns and stuff they just learned while they were shedding. That's like the aesthetic now; it's just playing these complex constructions, playing long patterns that go inside and outside the chord...cats just play pentatonic stuff a tritone apart when there's no listening to the group. That's not improvisation, man! That's just playing etudes. Everyone, especially saxophone players, sounds the same. (16-11-03)

Jazz and the nineteenth-century *Werktreue* aesthetic

Werktreue refers to the concept of the musical 'work', as distinguished from performance. The concept of *Werktreue* became an aesthetic ideal in Europe during the nineteenth century as the Romantic tradition developed.[59] In jazz, the formation

[58] It is crucial to consider that Coltrane made clear his own reservations of this style of improvisation: 'I'm worried that sometimes what I'm doing sounds like just academic exercises, and I'm trying more and more to make it sound prettier' (Coltrane as cited in Hentoff 1959: 2-3).

[59] For a discussion on the concept of *Werktreue* see Goehr (1992). It appears that the canon formation of jazz within institutions (such as the Smithsonian and the Lincoln Centre), the media (such as Ken Burns' *PBS* documentary 2000), published manuscripts, transcriptions and teaching aids (especially the Aebersold play-along editions) is reflective of such a work concept. Jazz improvisation appears to

of canon-like products such as 'Giant Steps', by virtue of both its complexity and its formulaic structural design, was the result of a range of interrelated social phenomena including the development of pedagogical trends based on a formalist musicology, institutionalisation, a discourse that uprooted the culture from its 'vernacular' roots, a proclivity towards the values and prestige of aesthetic modernism, a social inferiority complex with regards to Western art music, an increasing print and recording media and a naïve democratic impulse. Perhaps one of the most enduring ways in which jazz improvisation has embodied the cultural measure of objectivity and authenticity required in order to construct canons is through identification with some of the essential traits of Western art music.

Walser has observed the relationship between the discourse of jazz's proclivity towards the metaphysical conceit of autonomy, aesthetic unity and motivic development and a nineteenth-century aesthetic in classical music (1997). Gabriel Solis, in his work on Thelonius Monk (2002), remarks that:

> Historically the discussion of development and unity in jazz performances has taken place entirely in the context of a hegemony of Eurocentric musical values. It has involved the use of a language developed originally for European classical music, taking the Beethovenian model of musical composition as paradigmatic. As such, the discussion has largely ignored the importance to jazz musicians of a vernacular tradition of logical musical construction through call-and-response chains and the unifying quality of riff-based composition and performance. (Solis 2002: 12)

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be imitating a performance ideal of *Werktreue* that is geared towards producing enduring products. Indeed, Goehr notes that, via an appropriation of *Werktreue*, jazz musicians have 'sought and indeed found respect from "serious" musicians by dispensing with the smoky and noisy atmosphere of the club and by performing, instead, in tails' (Goehr 1989: 57).

Moreover, the relationship between Western art musicology's paradigms and a value system that discerns what is authentic, valuable and serious in music, has impacted on the improvising jazz musician's language. By appropriating standards of virtuosity and harmonic complexity, the power of Western hegemonic art music and, by extension, Western epistemologies and value systems, is reinforced. This observation supports the claim made in the previous chapter: the structural, compositional dimensions of the jazz language represent the discursive effects of power.

By applying Lydia Goehr's work-concept (1992) to 'Giant Steps', we can understand the ways in which the formalist conceit of an autonomous music, as applied to the jazz canon, is in fact compliant with socio-historical norms that value pedagogical institutionalisation which has in turn led to the demise of creative, performance-based learning, and the promotion of concert-hall aesthetics and analysable text-based products. By acknowledging the work-concept's emergence as a set of discursive practices which fulfil a regulative, rather than creative, function, we can situate the canonic status of 'Giant Steps' within the schema of bourgeois aesthetic culture which in turn dominates standards of taste and talent. 'Giant Steps'' hegemonic role illustrates the ways in which music, as a social institution concretised in forms and structures, becomes a cultural weapon which promotes Western metaphysical ideals of perfection and unity while concealing the struggles for position and power.

The roots of this discourse and its hegemony lie in analysis and, once again, the central culprit is formalism. Formalism was developed by Eduard Hanslick in

1854 in a treatise in which he attempted to render irrelevant subjectivism in music in order to pursue immanent musical forms and their intrinsic beauty. Hanslick defined music as 'tonally moving forms' (1957 [1854]: 82). According to this perspective, our appreciation and analysis of music can only be achieved through a disinterested attention to the autonomous themes that have an objective status in *works*; any other kind of music, such as improvising or 'preluding' is, according to Hanslick, 'contentless' (1957 [1854]: 82).[60] Formalism has its counterpart in linguistics in structuralism. Developed by de Saussure, structuralism distinguishes between *langue* and *parole* (1986 [1922]). The former is the system of signs, rules and virtual meanings that constitutes language; the latter is language as it is actually spoken. A structural approach to language focuses attention on *langue* which, like the score, is isolated as a closed universe of signs. From this perspective, language, like autonomous music, constitutes a world of its own without any outside reference; it is a self-sufficient system of inner relations.

Los Angeles-based drummer Marvin 'Smitty' Smith commented on the ways in which the culture of jazz education 'formulate[s] everything. Like, you play lick number 37 combined with lick numbers 152, 338 and 1012 and you have a perfect phrase for the first four bars of "All The Things You Are" ' (Smith as cited in Berendt 1992: 51). Another more extreme manifestation of the formalist view is reflected in the view of musicologist Andre Pirro who claimed that 'I never go to concerts any more. Why listen to music? To read it is enough' (Pirro as cited in

[60] This tradition can be seen as simultaneously disregarding the value of improvisation, engendering a hierarchy between composition and improvisation and justifying the idea of a canon – a body of exemplary works with objective and universal aesthetic value. In many senses it was due to the inferiority complex of musicologists and pedagogues that improvisation drew on a formalist work-based model in order to legitimise jazz as an art form, gain government grants and become recognised within academic institutions.

Chailley 1964: 104). As reified and abstract descriptions, both structuralist and formalist models omit anything concerning the relationship of language, or music, to anything else but itself. An analytical concentration on internal relationships removes the score from its social, temporal, ontological and performative contexts in order to examine it as a reified object.

Writings about jazz began to take a 'formalist' turn in the 1950s and 1960s, which, as a consequence, led institutions to search for and appropriate the aspects of jazz that resonated most clearly with Western art music's ideals of structure and coherence (see Potter 1990 for an overview). Furthermore, as Solis remarks, this formalism 'equates developmental logic and motivic unity with intellectual depth and, more importantly, all other kinds of musical structuring processes with intellectual poverty' (Solis 2002: 13).

Based on Hanslick's model, musicology engendered a construction of improvised jazz music as an autonomous text associated with the mind rather than the body, the intellect rather than the expression, and the score rather than the performance. The majority of these studies focused on an individual performer's style as it manifested itself in transcribed solos.[61] Schuller's description of Louis Armstrong's famous fanfare to 'West End Blues', a solo which is often described as the genesis of the jazz solo, makes bold claims for improvised music's autonomy and its immanent, formal design and intuitive sense for structural logic (1968). His description in turn makes a claim for jazz improvisation's metaphysical

[61] The most notable of these are Williams (1962); Schuller (1958); Owens (1974); Tirro (1974); Stewart (1975); Gushee (1981); Perlman and Greenblatt (1981); Kernfeld (1981, 1983); Porter (1985); Larson (1987); and Martin (1996).

transcendence from cultural worldliness and for the absolute, idealist assertion that music exists for music's sake:

> The clarion call of 'West End Blues' served notice that jazz had the potential capacity to compete with the highest order of previously known musical expression. Though nurtured by the crass entertainment and night-club world of the Prohibition era, Armstrong's music *transcended this context* and its implications. This was music for music's sake, not for the first time in jazz, to be sure, but never before in such a brilliant and unequivocal form. The beauties of this music were those of any great, compelling musical experience: expressive fervour, intense artistic commitment, *and an intuitive sense for structural logic, combined with superior instrumental skill.* By whatever definition of art – be it abstract, sophisticated, virtuosic, emotionally expressive, *structurally perfect* – Armstrong's music qualified. (Schuller 1968: 89, emphasis added)

Schuller singles out Armstrong in the development of jazz improvisation for the 'impeccable design' of his solos (1968: 92), his 'intuitive grasp of musical logic and continuity', his 'superior choice of notes and the resultant shape of his lines' (1968: 103) and his pioneering ability to lead an inchoate form into a unified style (cf. Monson 1996: 135). The absolutist claim for music's adherence to standards of universal, objective criteria has, of course, been interrogated by ethnomusicologists who situate such aesthetics within cultural contexts. In the context of jazz, these formalist approaches are considered to be essentially reductive since they fail to take into account aspects of interaction, feeling, 'groove', risk or creativity more generally. Furthermore, the deconstructivists have argued that the predilection for reductive analysis reinforces the text-based hegemony associated with academic

prestige and, as a consequence – and somewhat ironically – continues to marginalise the non-text based, performance-contingent aspects of improvisation which, it could be argued, lie at the centre of its practice.[62]

By reproving the modernist myth of the purely musical work of art, post-modern musicologists contest the detachment of works as aesthetically autonomous by situating analysis within contexts that reveal music's ideological agenda. According to them, the chimera of music's self-sufficiency is a ruse for absolute music's social and political content. Hence, Schuller's claim that Armstrong's solo represents 'music for music's sake', which transcends context, can be deconstructed by identifying connections between jazz's formal features and their socially constructed meanings.

Ingrid Monson relates this appropriation of absolute music's aesthetic standards by jazz scholars according to the pernicious influence of white supremacist values. Her own reflections on Schuller's formalist analyses in turn leads her to suggest that he represented 'the most prolific and visible exponent of a larger intellectual trend in jazz historiography that has left the evaluative standards of Western musical scholarship relatively unquestioned' (Monson 1996: 136). By evaluating jazz improvisation according to the supposedly universal standards of Western art music, scholars have overlooked the meanings that can be located in the social worlds which produced it. Furthermore, by perpetuating the myth of absolute music through pedagogy, certain patriarchal, imperialist and racial values are

[62] Robert Walser noted that an elucidation of jazz improvisation's structural properties are an 'excellent means for legitimating jazz in the academy', but rather than coming to terms with ideas of creativity, 'they offer only a kind of mystified, ahistorical, text-based legitimacy' (Walser 1995: 179).

perpetuated. However, in spite of this racial underbelly, a formalist aesthetic simultaneously provided jazz with a benchmark on which standards of excellence could be evaluated, and enabled jazz to rub shoulders with hegemonic classical music and to enjoy status as a 'serious' art form worthy of study at universities and conservatories.

John Gennari singles out Schuller's formalist presuppositions constructed through analyses, for paying scant attention to an exploration of socio-cultural context. According to Gennari, Schuller 'approach[es] individual works of art as self-contained, self-defining objects to be elucidated as autonomous aesthetic works rather than understood as documents created in specific socio-historical contexts' (Gennari 1991: 465). Similarly, Bruce Johnson argues that there is an aesthetic agenda entrenched within musicology that, through the work of scholars such as Schuller and Thomas Owens (1974), perpetuates an analytical model inherited from musicology and aesthetic formalism (Johnson 2002). He maintains that this aesthetic should not be the basis for a discourse of jazz. Moreover, he believes that jazz has not been properly recognised and understood: 'Because of its distinctive practices and taxonomic ambiguity, jazz (like other related musics) has not enjoyed artistic recognition commensurate with its character and influence' (Johnson 2002: 100). Furthermore, he claims that this is a direct result of the cultural gatekeepers embodied in the forms and practices of traditional musicology:

> Although under increasing interrogation during the twentieth century, this [modernist] epistemology [of musicology] remains dominant in the public discourse of western cultures and their satellites, the conditioned reflex that governs ways of thinking and practising culture. (Johnson 2002: 100)

Jazz scholarship codifies jazz practice in order to canonise particular jazz artists and their styles. In his article 'Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography', Scott DeVeaux assesses the simplistic presentation of jazz in college textbooks as a 'coherent whole' (1991: 525) which neglects the chaotic diversity of style that characterises both the music and its social origins. The prevalence of an 'official history' is designed to reduce and reify particular easily comprehensible and repeatable aspects of the tradition that can be sedimented and reiterated through each performative act. DeVeaux skilfully parodies jazz historiography's narrative structure:

> After an obligatory nod to African origins and ragtime antecedents, the music is shown to move through a succession of styles or periods, each with a conveniently distinctive label and time period: New Orleans jazz up through the 1920s, swing in the 1930s, bebop in the 1940s, cool jazz and hard bop in the 1950s, free jazz and fusion in the 1960s. Details of emphasis vary. But from textbook to textbook, there is substantive agreement on the defining features of each style, the pantheon of great innovators, and the canon of recorded masterpieces. (DeVeaux 1991: 525)

Such a narrative has etched itself into the wider culturally-aware public, but hidden within it are some interesting cases of discursive distortion. Moreover, the hegemony this perspective enjoys with a largely uncritical consent, even from the community's musicians, has affected the culture of jazz improvisation. Krin Gabbard observes that, in contrast to the pluralistic anthologies that have characterised English and World literature during the past 40 years, *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* 'still stands as the only major listening text for an introductory course in jazz history' (1995: 13). This official version of jazz history is both a symptom and cause

of the gradual acceptance of jazz within the Academy and in the society at large as respectable art music. It has only been via enduring symbols – the bebop language, John Coltrane's solos, Miles Davis' mood poems, Duke Ellington's compositions and Ornette Coleman's *avant-garde* – that the jazz tradition generates the appropriate authority with which to function positively in society and integrate its members. By telling stories about itself – creating historical narratives – members of the community reaffirm their founding symbols and maintain their identities. However, these symbols can be distorted, fixed, fetishised and appropriated by cultural monopolies who in turn radically affect the character of the tradition and the musical symbols which made it meaningful.

Conclusion

A so-called 'New Musicological' tradition has been embraced by a generation of jazz scholars who warn against the ideological abuses attendant upon processes of canonisation in jazz improvisation. From this perspective, we can understand the construction of the jazz tradition as a mystificatory discourse which valorises particular representations of jazz over others. As such, the compositional-like structures outlined in chapter 4, can be read as lineaments of social power and privilege.

Having taken these warnings seriously, in the following section I attempt to retrieve a more productive understanding of the compositional structures, textual inscription and canonisation process inherent in the improvisatory jazz tradition. Central to this retrieval is a reconsideration of music's meaning. While the new generation of scholars have resituated music's meaning on the social, rather than the

musical plane, I consider whether this is disadvantageous in understanding the symbolic value jazz improvisation affords. This perspective will entail an understanding of 'Giant Steps' not in terms of a socially instituted work-concept which operates hegemonically in the jazz culture, but rather as a work which has achieved an independent afterlife. By escaping the original contexts of its production and reception, 'Giant Steps', as a paradigmatic work, addresses us anew in different contexts. Individual works, jazz standards and paradigmatic themes insert themselves into our world through our encounter with them. They dialectically enrich our present contexts with their own unique temporal charge. By renouncing these text-based elements of jazz as ideologically pernicious, we overlook their abilities to engage us differently in different contexts and to intersect their unique horizons, and the complex forms of temporality, mood and affect they configure, with our own.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Exploring New Models for Interpretation

Introduction: emic studies of jazz improvisation

The field of ethnomusicology instigated an interpretive approach which considers music in its cultural context. It has become responsive to the ways in which musicians think about and theorise music themselves, by developing culturally specific musical concepts that correspond to their own particular cultural matrices (see for example, Zemp 1978; Becker and Becker 1981; Stone 1982; and Feld 1982, 1988). These studies evade the formal, ahistorical and ethnocentric models and conceited aesthetic standards perpetuated by traditional musical analysis, in favour of an ethnotheoretical approach which considers the insider, or emic perspectives of musical theory.[63]

Paul Berliner's ethnographic study of jazz (1994) has succeeded as both a comprehensive model of this ethnomusicological approach and as an exhaustive study of the ways in which jazz musicians attain and expand their skills. The present study, along with any other in jazz studies, must be viewed in relation to Berliner's since his ethnographic treatment of the jazz community, and the ways in which jazz musicians become enculturated within this community, is virtually complete. However, his material opens many new interpretive avenues and invites an extended dialogue. One of these dialogues has been provided by Ingrid Monson who rethinks jazz musical analysis from an interactive point of view and understands the ways in which we can learn about society through the interacting ensemble (Monson 1996).

[63] The distinction between emics and etics in ethnography, coined by Kenneth Pike (Headland, Pike and Harris 1990), refers to the distinction between insider and outsider perspectives of culture, between indigenous conceptual frameworks and external frameworks. See Alvarez-Pereyre and Arom (1993), Baumann (1993) and Herndon (1993) for a discussion of emics and etics in ethnomusicology.

In the proceeding chapters I attempt to extend this dialogue in another direction by offering an alternative interpretation which hopefully builds on, rather than contradicts, the new directions both these ethnomusicological studies instigated.

While Berliner and Monson, as ethnomusicologists, have endeavoured to develop emic-based ethnotheories of the culture of jazz, both neglect to consider the ways in which objective, formalist and structural interpretations – considered alien to the music itself – have actually become part of the culture and have indeed helped shape that culture and concretise its enduring values. With this in mind, scholars should no longer be concerned with simply critiquing or deconstructing the ideological assumptions that these analytical approaches engender in an attempt to find a 'truer' representation of the music on the social plane; rather, it is necessary to explore the ways in which these musical structures help structure a culture's self-understanding and enable a transformation from within.

By listening to the voices of jazz musicians and discussing with them their relationship to the tradition, the processes of canonisation and the analytical models that represent it and become the basis of their culture, I have become aware of the subtle ways in which musicians circumvent the potentially fixed and fetishised improvisatory discourses, not through radical deconstructive critique, but through a dialectical process in which they engage in productive dialogue between the jazz tradition and their own understanding of themselves.

It is this very process that invited me to consider that all of our analytical methods are presupposing the same fundamental issue: that jazz music is symbolic to

an irreducible core. This insight makes it necessary to look beyond the jazz language as a system of signs, and towards exploring instead the ways in which we bring experience to this language. The majority of recent studies of jazz improvisation have identified the existence of a jazz language according to a formalist paradigm, only to deny the meaningfulness of this language as a system in order to explore some surplus of meaning, some magical transcendence into a realm that surpasses language and representation.[64] Beyond structures, the power of jazz music is supposed to lie in some ineffable, magical and transcendental realm that can only be experienced rather than explained.[65] However, by rethinking the jazz language as the very medium of these magical experiences and not merely as the ashes that lie at the ground of experience, we are no longer confronted with the simple dichotomies between, for instance, structure and experience, forms and their surplus and representation and imagination, that have characterised musicological discourse. Paul Ricoeur writes: '[t]o bring [human experience] into language is not to change it into something else, but, in articulating and developing it, to make it become itself' (1981:110).

Improvisation must be studied according to multiple dimensions. I have already elucidated the formal dimension of improvisation and the ways in which jazz's idiomatic language is represented, according to analytical precision, as signs with rules of operations and interrelationship. I have also considered a historical dimension in which the language has a historicity which is understood according to a canon. By concluding our understanding of jazz at this dimension, it is easy to succumb to a deconstructivist perspective since our idea of meaning still gravitates

[64] Berliner describes these as a 'soloist's most salient experiences in the heat of performance [which] involve poetic leaps of imagination to phrases that are unrelated, or only minimally related, to the storehouse' (1994: 216-217), and Monson refers to the 'seemingly ineffable physical qualities that produce emotional reactions in listeners' (1996: 211).
[65] This, of course, is the cornerstone of Charles Seeger's *linguocentric predicament* (1977).

towards the social and its mystifying surplus. In order to offer a different perspective which can relate through a dialectic the two sides of the musical fabric, it is necessary to add two new dimensions: the phenomenological level of the performance experience, and the hermeneutical dimension of self-knowledge. It is through these dimensions that we can begin to link together analytical precision with ontological testimony.

Phenomenology

Having identified the limitations of a formalist understanding of improvised music's meaningfulness on the twofold basis of the reductive understanding of the power of codes in place of the individual capacity for creativity, and of the social power these codes assume when taken as the model of reality, it is necessary to enter into a phenomenology of jazz improvisation. Through such a reading, we can begin to understand how the jazz language expresses the meaning of the world and of being, and how, by means of this language, musicians bring meaning to their world. Phenomenology enables a radical departure from an epistemological category of formal structures to an ontological category which understands every gesture as preceded by a pre-understanding of being-in-the-world.

Phenomenology's departure from traditional Cartesian epistemologies in general, and from the neo-Kantian manifestation of formalism in particular, provides a different perspective from which to understand and analyse jazz improvisation. In short, a phenomenological method can lead us in two productive directions: towards an understanding of improvised musical performances as events, rather than as static objects, which shape the experience of listeners and performers as it unfolds; and

away from the Kantian idea that art and reality are separate – that art is embodied in an aesthetic consciousness which can offer nothing new to say about reality.

The phenomenological method, developed primarily by Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century, challenges the Cartesian *cogito* which located experience in an isolated, disembodied consciousness, self-sufficient and located in the deep recesses of the thinking subject. Husserl proposed that the *cogito* always thinks *of* something; our consciousness is directed and intentional: always directed towards some content or phenomena (Husserl 1969 [1905]). This intentionality emphasises the indissoluble unity between the conscious mind and that of which it is conscious. For Husserl, the objects of the world become correlates of our intentional acts; our knowledge is co-created with its objects. Thus, rather than basing our knowledge on certain propositions which could not be doubted – the Cartesian method – phenomenology begins from our immediate perception of the phenomena as they present themselves to us.

In music, Ferrara proposes that phenomenology should be developed as a tool for musical analysis to complement conventional methods in order to understand, for instance, the temporal experience of music (1984, 1991). For Nattiez:

> The musical work is not merely what we used to call the 'text'; it is not merely a whole composed of 'structures'...The essence of a musical work is at once its genesis, its organisation, and the way it is perceived'. (Nattiez 1990: ix)

Other musicologists (Ihde 1976; Clifton 1975; Ingarden 1986; Lewin 1986; Lochhead 1980, 1983, 1989a, 1989b; and Covach 1994) have provided some useful insights into

the possible application of phenomenology to music, that are directed towards the relationship between music and the listener or performer, rather than towards the substance of the music itself as an objective entity. For instance, Lochhead argues that 'phenomenology has provided a method to explore the features of musical structure which have been covered over by our traditional concepts: the features of sound and time' (1983: 377). Similarly, Clifton writes that 'phenomenological thought is not so much the building up of a system, as an excavation beneath all systems to achieve the level at which we first accept music as a real, individuated substance' (1975: 79-80). More specifically, Alfred Pike (1974) has contributed the notion of 'intuitive cognition' and 'provision' in order to understand the jazz improviser's aptitude in 'digging in to' the fundamentals of musical events in order to explore the possibilities for further development these events engender. He writes:

> What is first given must be developed. The incipient jazz image has its future horizons, and the improviser successively changes his viewpoint as he strives for these horizons. The immediate perceptual field contains within itself the potential structure of future fields. (Pike 1974: 89)

Finally, Sudnow's study of his experiences learning jazz piano improvisation provides a model of phenomenological analysis based on a Husserl's *eidetic* or essential description of phenomena and Merleau-Ponty's embodied perception (Sudnow 1978, 2001). In the 'rewritten' account of his classic study (2001), Sudnow reflects on the philosophical objectives of his phenomenological approach:

> The aim isn't explanatory but descriptive, a phenomenological account of handwork as it's known to a performing musician, without consulting the expert opinions of other practitioners, analysts of practitioners, or other professional

> students of conduct ... The goal is to describe jazz from a player's perspective (without which it wouldn't exist), the player reflecting on his skills with "no one but himself to consult", to quote philosopher Merleau-Ponty' (2001: 3).[66]

When applying a phenomenological method to music analysis, music theorists have bracketed conventional methods and theories so as to invite the listener to hear the music in a fresh and new way. As a result, the emphasis has been directed to the perceptual experience of the music itself – the experiential interface of music as it appears to the consciousness. Since, according to a phenomenological method, consciousness and world are not separate but in relation, the same must be said of music and consciousness; it is only subsequently, at the level of reflective logic, that they are divided into separate entities amenable to more traditional analysis.

One particular aspect that emerges from a phenomenological analysis is music's temporal dimension. Since improvisation does not yield a score, this dimension of the musical experience is particularly acute. The perceptions of time which an improvisation unfolds may provide a starting point for an understanding of the relationship between music and being, and of the ways in which music transfigures or reshapes reality and discloses new possibilities for meaning.

[66] As a sustained meditation on the development of improvisatory skill, Sudnow's work provides a wealthy complement to the insights provided by the musicians in the present study (see below). However, the phenomenological basis of his research is limited since it remains unable to address the issues of symbolic language and textual interpretation and thus he is unable to make the necessary connection between ontological testimony and analytical precision and restores the gulf between the two sides of the musical fabric. As I illustrate in chapter 9, it is only by dialectically relating the phenomenological experiences of improvisation with the structuring principles of emplotment or composition that we can understand how, by virtue of its internal order, improvising augments reality and experience by capturing it in a network of signs and symbols.

Experiencing improvisation

During a conversation with Jason Goldman at USC during December 2002, Goldman illustrated the ways in which the musical experience presents itself in ways that cannot be reduced to its composite parts:

> Once you really get into playing jazz, it just becomes a way of hearing sounds and experiencing music. It's kinda funny though coz when you first start listening to jazz, you don't really get it; it's just kinda weird sounds that have no real sense. But when you get into it properly and you start learning, you begin to hear all the mechanics and you dig someone's sound cos they've got this great technique. Coz, you know, you're shedding all the time...But once you've done your shedding – and I mean like five hours a day, at least. Man, sometimes I was playing from when I woke up and, like, right through the day without eating. I wouldn't recommend that to my, the kids I teach now, but it's real important that you do all the transcribing and, you know, learning about the theory. But then you've got to get all of that out of the way. (10-11-02)

I wondered if he could help to explain this next step without reducing it to psychologistic explanations or rendering it unarticulable – as a spirit possession or act of magic – but in terms of the language itself:

> You know, at Berklee they tell you something like 'learn everything and then unlearn it', you know, so that you're not relying on all of that stuff you've shed. I think Miles, or Bird, or someone, also said something like 'practice, practice, practice and then forget all of that shit and just play!'. That's it, man! I mean, you can't get by by playing jazz without knowing all the rules, knowing the vocabulary, but you can't just regurgitate all of that when you play. There's

> other things that you listen out to: other cats in the group, what's happening with the time, the tradition...stuff like that which then gets put back into your solos which probably wasn't there when you were practicing. (10-12-02)

In many senses, jazz musicians act as phenomenologists in 'bracketing off' their prejudgements through a process of 'forgetting' in order to understand the richness of the musical experience. Tenor saxophonist David Smart, with whom I met up before a *Jax* jam session in November 2003, drew my attention to the importance of listening in jazz improvisation. For him, Listening became like an active 'bracketing', meaning that a theoretical or objective consciousness was left behind in favour of a more productive and assimilative process that brought to presentation the performer's close relationship to the unfolding sounds in the course of performance:

> It's really about finding these sounds and colours that you want to fit into your playing. They'll all come out if that's the kind of sound you're searching for. It took me a while to realise this. I was hung up on wanting to get a modern sound and copied a whole bunch of Brecker licks and listened to cats like David Sanchez and Eric Alexander and tried to transcribe and analyse what was going on in their solos. But, you know, the stuff they do is simple if you just listen to the chords. It's not like you have to necessarily think about what you're playing if you already hear it. As soon as I stopped thinking about the theoretical stuff that went on...like doing an altered pentatonic...or thinking that I'm playing a C♯ triad over a C major chord...and listened to the changes and saw for myself what happened, then I understood it. (16-11-03)

Trumpeter Chris Baker also drew my attention to the limitations of a text-based analytical approach which loses the eventfulness of music as it is experienced:

> When I'm, like, reading through a transcribed solo of someone like Woody Shaw, I can never get anything to sound good. It just sounds so mechanical. My teacher advised that I check out his transcriptions 'cause he's a good example of playing pentatonic ideas and ways in which you can structure your outside playing. But I find that when I'm just following transcriptions it's nothing to do with improvisation. It's so far away from what Woody was thinking at the time. Actually, I think it kinda makes it more difficult than it already is...I think it makes you realise that...I mean, Woody Shaw wasn't consciously thinking about playing these outside pentatonics when he played, he was just blowing the sounds he heard in his head. He'd been listening to cats like Freddie Hubbard and 'Trane and Eric Dolphy so that's what he heard in his head so that's what he played. You can only play the kinds of things Woody Shaw plays if you're hearing what he's hearing in the music. (10-11-02)

Similarly, Berliner's informant John McNeil recognised that a disembodied analytical understanding of music will not provide the necessary preconditions for a good solo. He told Berliner that 'if you try to force something that you've learned into your solos, say a phrase that is real hip, it will sound really contrived, like it doesn't have anything to do with what you just played before it' (McNeil as cited in Berliner 1994: 263). This underscores my assertion that in improvised music there is a co-constitution of the performer and the unfolding music; that improvisation is an art of time which configures rather than isolates individual phrases in order to communicate its meaningfulness. Musical motifs and gestures do not owe their ontological testimony by virtue of their disembodied, objective nature that stands at a distance from their performer or receiver; rather, this quality and experience emerges from a relationship of co-constitution.

Despite these advances in exploring experiences as they emerge, rather than exploring them as static objects, phenomenology is limited when it claims that the foundations for knowledge are rooted in consciousness, in mental acts, in what Husserl referred to as a 'transcendental ego' (1969 [1905]). Rather than understanding improvisation as a mental act over which we are the masters and our language is the tool, we need to develop a means of understanding the world that improvisation unfolds. Bass player Chuck Israels told Paul Berliner that 'no matter what you're doing or thinking about beforehand, from the very moment the performance begins, you plunge into that world of sounds. It becomes your world instantly, and your whole consciousness changes' (Israels as cited in Berliner 1994: 348). Heidegger's observation that 'man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man' (1971: 146) directed me towards his fundamental ontology in order to understand the ways in which improvising is a mode of being-in-the-world.

Being-in-the-world-of-improvisation

By rejecting formalism in favour of a phenomenological description of the ways in which music appears to our consciousness irrespective of its formal or structural attributes, we are left incapable of understanding how these apparently immediate experiences can be brought into the world of shared understandings and symbolic values. Phenomenology reduces improvisation's ability to say something to the world of appearances and cannot suggest ways in which new worlds may be configured and new realities referenced.

In order to make these dimensions of the improvisatory process available to critical reflection and analysis, we need to begin to consider the ways in which improvised performances affect our being-in-the-world. In other words, it becomes necessary to begin considering an aesthetic work such as an improvised performance, an art work, sculpture, dance or text, as not simply existing as a work in itself, hermetically sealed as an aesthetic product; rather, these works *work* on us by virtue of their engagement with our imaginations, constantly producing new meanings.

What am I referring to when I speak of the relationship between improvisation and being-in-the-world? The idea of being-in-the-world was developed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, in which he elucidated the concept of *Dasein*, which is literally translated as 'being there' or 'being here' (1962 [1927]). By approaching improvised music from an ontological, rather than an epistemological, perspective, we have to come to terms with the worlds that improvisers inhabit and project, and with the relationship that exists between the performer and the world.

What is a world? A world includes everything that we are concerned with, from the contents of our consciousness, to other people, to the environment, to tools, to dwelling places, to our future plans. A world consists of things we care about, and it is from this primary care that the world presents its contents with value and meaning. Each object in this world has a relationship with us; objects are not neutral and separate; rather, they are co-extensive with our consciousnesses. Moreover, these objects and this world are available to others; they are shared. Through others, the world and being is constituted and maintained. Since we are always being-in-the-world, our being never precedes our world; we are always being *there* (*Dasein*).

As a consequence of the coterminous nature of our being and our world, this being-in-the-world is revealed or disclosed according to moods, understandings and discourses. The ways in which we find ourselves already-in-the-world, therefore, structure the ways in which we operate, or dwell, in that world. For instance, our moods illuminate our being-in-the-world and reveal how we are attuned to the environment. Thus, a mood is not simply a subjective emotion; it is acknowledgment of the ways in which we find ourselves in the world. Thus, moods are apprehended neither at an objective or subjective level; rather, they pre-empt this dualism and illustrate the inseparability of our being from our world.

This understanding of mood as the disclosure of our being-in-the-world, provides an appropriate basis to rethink the notion of 'groove', the defining aesthetic in jazz improvisation, according to an ontological perspective on a number of levels. Despite the centrality of this aesthetic principle, it is a feature which remains elusive and seemingly un-analysable according to the procedures of epistemological musicology. As a consequence, the notion has often found only partial or metaphorical explanation via the categories of society, language and semiotics.[67] By attempting to understand 'groove' in terms of mood (not metaphorically – referring to an external world – but ontologically), we can begin to understand how improvisers ontologically structure themselves within a world and disclose aspects of being that remain mute in ordinary experience. That grooving represents a world in which we

[67] Monson's theory of groove is based on the principle of conversation which has the dual status of a linguistic and social category. However, she also attempted to categorise it according to both social relations – 'Don Byron, for example, described grooving as "a euphoria that comes from playing good time *with* somebody"' (Monson 1996: 68) – and as a synonym for feelings which evokes an emotional response. Unfortunately, Monson resists considering the ontological implications of these insights and pursues instead the social and linguistic implications that link the process of groove with issues of racial identity.

can dwell, a place in which our being manifests itself, is clearly represented in Wynton Marsalis' pithy, albeit metaphorical, definition:

> Jazz music is freedom of expression with a groove. Jazz music is down-home and sophisticated. The feeling of jazz is like the feeling you get going into your favourite grandmother's house. You know there's all kind of things in there that you might not recognise but it's accumulated wisdom. The whole feeling of the house is warm. And it's a familiar place. You've been there before, and then when you sit down to that table to eat – well, everything is laid out for you. (Marsalis as cited in Ward 2001: 116)

Secondly, when musicians improvise, they are always within-the-world-of-music; they are never outside of this world, looking at it from a distance. Each improvised performance is a unique expression of an individual's being-in-the-world-of-music and, as such, it is imbibed with an intense sense of presence or occurrence within this world. The notion of 'finding the groove' resonates with Heidegger's concept of the authentic self which celebrates this occurrence within the world.[68]

Thirdly, this notion of being-in-the-world draws attention to our 'being-with' others: the musical world is always a 'world-with-others'. Jazz improvisation is a communal activity, a collaborative performance in which the musicians are simultaneously establishing their shared sense of being-in-the-world through the 'groove'. Musicians feel each other's sense of being when they play together; there is a sense of ontological connectedness which reinforces the intense presence of the 'groove', which simultaneously engenders an authentic sense of being in an

[68] Heidegger states that, 'Ontologically mood is a primordial kind of being for *Dasein*, in which *Dasein* is disclosed to itself prior to all cognition and volition, and beyond their range of disclosure' (1962 [1927]: 136).

unconcealed state as beings *engaging* the world rather than as objects separated from it. Isaac Darche related to me, in December 2003 at *Lunaria*, the connectedness he feels to his fellow group members and to the audience when a 'groove' is established:

> When I've been playing with people who I feel comfortable with, we can often go in some really unexpected and amazing directions and raise the level of the performance onto another level. Sometimes people come up to us after a performance and say that they really dug our chemistry or really felt that we were connected and I think that gives them something to join into as well, they can participate in the performance. (01-12-03)

Similarly, when we met up at *Jax* in November 2003, Jason Goldman evoked the participatory belonging-in-the-world-of-improvisation:

> When you're playing together in a group and everything fits, you're right there man, locked into everybody else and into yourself. It's like it brings out this layer deep inside of you. (16-11-03)

And Nick Keller remarked that:

> Once you've got a groove and everybody's in the same place, that's when it starts to happen. Without that, it's just, like, neutral, it's not really going anywhere, it's like a keyboard drum pattern. Being in the groove sets you up and puts you in this different world. You get this source of inspiration and this kind of warmth...or like a feeling of being at home when you feel comfortable

> and most like yourself...and you can focus just on the music and what's going on around you at that time.[69] (17-10-03)

So, for jazz improvisers, 'groove', as the unconcealing of mood, represents a fundamental awareness of being-in-the-world-of-music. Improvisers become attuned to each other and to the music, and everything around them takes on significance according to that being-in-the-world. Jason Goldman mentioned that:

> You don't often consciously choose what you're gonna play right then but you have a whole load of things that you can say when it's the right time to say them and that comes out, you know, when you're playing in the groove with other people. You can't force it out. (10-12-02)

Being-in-the-world-of-the-groove, or of improvisation, is that mode in which the improvisers structure their worlds around their selves. In other words, improvisers need things at hand: their instruments, a facility on their instruments, a good reed, other members of the band similarly prepared, a vocabulary of phrases, perhaps a chart or a *Real Book*, with which to set up the world in which they perform. The tools that become available to them are not simply available according to their physical location or proximity, but to an ontological condition of being involved with them. The tools that surround the improviser, physically and ontologically, are structured according to the performance and give being to the world of the performer. Thus, the world becomes arranged to suit the performer and the others around him or her. Our moods, or 'grooves', emerge as our world is constituted to embody our

[69] Drummer Michael Carvin told Ingrid Monson that being in the groove was like soaking in a bathtub and feeling ' "Oh, that's what I needed" ' (Carvin as cited in Monson 1996: 68) and clarinettist Don Byron suggested that being in the groove is ' "about feeling that time itself is pleasurable" ' (Don Byron as cited in Monson 1996: 68).

being and an awareness of ourselves in the world.[70] 'Groove' becomes the ways in which we experience our openness to the world.

By understanding the relationship between being and world, and the ways in which mood (or 'groove') is the fundamental way in which the world reveals itself to us and attunes us to it, we can begin to understand the *relationship* between the objects of the world of improvisation and the improvisatory openness we embrace, rather than separating them as incommensurable.

Improvisation as mastery

A 'groove' makes it possible to direct ourselves towards something and thus give shape to our experience. This fundamental form of understanding is more like mastery in character – a capacity or facility – than knowledge according to a Cartesian transcendentalism. This type of mastery also encompasses practical activities such as living with others, becoming friends, relaxing, waiting and so on. Furthermore, this mastery is caught up with our very efforts to exist. They comprise a mode of being which enables us to orient ourselves in the world.[71]

In other words, we are always already with others, we are always already alongside other things, we are always already in a mood. These things are not objective facts at a distance from our being; rather, the things are related to us in current involvement. Things please us, they threaten us, they sadden us, they appeal

[70] Mood is often the translation of the German word *stimmung* which also denotes to attunement. This musical concept is appropriate to an ontological understanding of groove and also reflects Alfred Schutz's mutual tuning-in relationship – that common experience felt when engaged in interpersonal relationships such as music or friendship: the 'sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time, this living through a vivid present in common [which] constitutes...the mutual tuning-in relationship, the experience of "We", which is at the foundation of all possible communication' (Schutz 1964: 173).
[71] *Dasein* 'finds itself in its throwness' (Heidegger 1962 [1927]: 174).

to us; we understand things when they become a possibility for us, when we realise that we can be *involved* in them. Similarly, a musical pattern or a ii-V-I phrase can only be understood if its possibilities are realised. We project our possibilities and view objects or gestures *as* capable of fulfilling particular developments or potentialities. We can only grasp something *as* a particular situation related to our current concerns. Things present themselves as 'ready-to-hand'. Tables gain significance *as* something to eat or write on. As I eat, for instance, the table gains significance not as a discrete object (à la Descartes), but according to a particular network of contexts. For example, the table exists – along with other things-at-hand such as a glass, knives and forks – as a support for my plate and a place to sit, which in turn has significance as the means through which I can eat, which itself is situated in a context of culture, tradition, my family, survival and so on. Things only have meaning as they relate to the world in which we are situated; nothing has meaning in and of itself as an object. Thus, the traditional subject-object split that characterises Western epistemology is derived from a more fundamental, or ontological, being-in-the-world. Correspondingly, music is not comprised of objects – for instance, intervals that can be measured objectively – but of relationships or involvements. Consider this comment by Isaac Darche, made in October 2003:

> I only think of phrases as a way to get my playing sounding the way I want it to be. There's this way that you could approach it by, like, amassing a whole bunch of Bird licks or, like, passages that 'Trane plays, but it's not really about that. It's more, like, when you're playing you're not consciously thinking...and, like, rooting into your library of phrases and patterns, and thinking, 'I'll play this phrase now that's linked to Charlie Parker's phrase from Billie's Bounce from the 1946 recording on Savoy...blah, blah'! You know? It's not about that, it's whatever you need to play that fits in with your solo at that time. You've

> got to look at the whole of the solo and not just break it up into little parts. You make the ideas yours and respond to what's going on in the music, what the drums are playing, whether the audience is into it. (27-10-03)

Darche was echoing Heidegger's image of understanding as deriving from the possibility of action that is projected onto a thing: 'meaning is...not a property attached to entities, lying "behind" them, or floating somewhere as an "intermediate domain"' (Heidegger 1962 [1927]: 193); rather, as humans, we have an intuitive, pre-reflective understanding of things in the world and their capacity to function in a particular way. As Darche suggested, during the course of performance one does not strategically and reflectively think, 'I'll play this phrase now that's linked to Charlie Parker's phrase from Billie's Bounce...'; rather, the phrase presents itself as ready-to-hand for the purposes of constructing an improvised melody in the course of performance. The readiness of these phrases also structure the mode of the performer's being. The phrases and gestures are located and structured according to the being of the performer and the particular mood that is disclosed through 'groove'. Jason Goldman commented that:

> You might get cats listening to you and saying 'he's playing a melodic minor scale there, he's been shedding on this or that book'. But to me, none of that matters when you're playing. Actually, if I think about that it won't happen, it won't come out right in the solo. That thinking will slow me down. You know, it's always: 'Don't think. Play!'. (10-12-02)

Mark Small also wrote:

> If I use phrases in my playing, it won't be intentional. Well, it kind of will be but only 'cause it's linked to what I'm playing. It's not like I'm reaching up on a high shelf finding a phrase behind that old can of beans. Anything I play

> flows organically from the musical situation, from the groove that I've got with the band. Each phrase has to lock into that groove to sustain it and keep it going so, like, I'm always listening and playing what I hear and what feeds into that groove to nourish it. (email correspondence 09-09-03)

Once something has been understood in its capacity to be ready-at-hand, one can begin to interpret its meaning further through an explicit analysis. Such a consideration of the thing's qualities forces one to reflect on the thing's potential and possibilities. Heidegger explains that when 'the ready-to-hand comes *explicitly* into the sight which understands...we take apart in its "in order to do" that which is circumspectively ready-to-hand, and we concern ourselves with it in accordance with what becomes visible through this process' (1962 [1927]: 189).

Isaac Darche's description of acquiring a style is helpful in elucidating this process:

> Once I realise that something I've heard and maybe played a couple of times without knowing it, like [sings the 'Cry Me a River' lick], when I work out that it is based on an altered chord and that the altered chord is the 7th note of the melodic minor, and I know that I can play it over a V chord, and it's quite cool in minor blues, and all of that, then I think 'right, maybe I can make some more patterns over those notes'. But the point is that I'm already familiar with the sound and I know what context it sounds good in the first place. You can't understand jazz in an abstract way. I can't just learn the 7th mode of the melodic minor scale and then just play some random pattern over it without being in tune to the whole sound and the ways in which things fit...Ideas only work in my playing if I've tried them out and they work, or I understand what their function is through playing, not theoretically. Theory always has to come second to what you hear and feel. (01-12-03)

As a result of explicit interpretation, the ready-to-hand intimacy between the thing and our activity becomes 'present-at-hand' and 'stands over against us' as being 'other'. However, as Heidegger states, '...there are many intermediate gradations' between the engaged 'ready-to-hand' and the theoretical assertion about something 'present-at-hand' (1962 [1927]: 201). Ready-to-hand musical statements would occur at the level of playing by ear. A particular statement would just fit with what the improviser hears. There is a natural fit between the thing, the subject and the world; each is mutually engaged with the other. One can stay involved with a musical statement if one has a theoretical understanding of, for instance, a chord change. There may be some explicit recognition that the group is about to go into the bridge of 'Rhythm Changes', for instance, and the performer has to shift to a different melodic and harmonic approach. At the extreme level of present-at-hand, however, are theoretical reflections on the physical or tonal properties of a musical gesture. The conscious decision to use a particular phrase here or there in both my and my informants' experience simply does not work.

Ian Vo recalls an attempt to shift his perspective from 'ready-to-hand' to 'present-at-hand' during a jam session in December 2003:

> I always remember this time that I learned this Kenny Garrett lick, a thing he did over the changes to 'There Will Never Be Another You'. I was listening to the album (John Schofield, *Works for Me*: 2001) that day and he did a cool kind of turnaround using fourths over a whole tone scale. I didn't really practice it but I got the idea of it and sort of thought about it while I was driving down here (to *Jax* in Glendale). When I got my horn together I quietly ran through it and pretty much thought I had it. Then we played through something, I can't

> remember what, maybe 'There is no Greater Love' and I knew that had a similarish turnaround. Man! Each chorus I was thinking about when I could try it out 'cause I knew it'd sound hip but like the band rolled on and I kept missing my chance. Sometimes I got little bits of it out and man, I was so embarrassed and the whole solo just kinda collapsed and I had no direction 'cause I kept thinking too much. (10-12-03)

Vo's involvement with this particular phrase had only really been grasped as an object present-at-hand. While he understood the theoretical implications of the phrase, he had not attended to his *own* involvement with it as ready-to-hand. His relationship to the world had changed. Objects that are ready-to-hand offer themselves to us as tools for the pursuit of our aims; objects become present-at-hand when they refuse to go along with being used for the pursuit of our aims, and rather exist 'standing over against us' as an 'other' of our selves and our involvement in the world. On this occasion, Vo had become an observer of the world and was no longer placed within it. By enumerating its objective properties, 'a cool kind of turnaround using fourths over a whole tone scale', he lost sight of what the phrase was, what it revealed *as* a thing in the world of improvised performance. A thing's being and truth is not in its objective properties since these are themselves derivative of its revealing itself *as* something. This process of revealing is an ontological truth that precedes any objectification when we interpret.

In an email from Mark Small (12-11-03), he suggested that 'musical terms can describe what the solo "is" (e.g. that was a major tetrachord over a dominant 7^{th} chord), but not how the player arrived at the solo, which is the question at hand'. It is also worth recalling Bob Russell's similar comment that:

> [John] Coltrane may have played a passage in Mr. P.C. that was based on the melodic minor scale. He may not have actually been thinking about the melodic minor scale at the time he played the passage; he may have simply heard a melodic design in his head which turned out to be related to the scale. In later years, someone analyses the solo and discovers that the notes in question came from the C melodic minor scale. They surmise that if they practice a variety of sequences from the same scale, they will be able to produce Coltrane-like results. Unfortunately, they are completely overlooking the wealth of experience and environment which Coltrane had to live through in order to lead him to choose those particular notes at that particular instant! He was looking for a song to sing; they are looking for a formula to exploit. (email correspondence 12-12-02)

Building a storehouse

In spite of these observations, it is this process of objectification that enables us to understand previous understandings. The process serves as a means of building a storehouse from earlier ways of understanding. Indeed, this metaphor of a storehouse is apposite and familiar to jazz musicians, as it refers to the collection of vocabulary items collected over years of playing, practicing, transcribing and listening. Through developing a storehouse, musicians are confronted with a record of their involvements in the world which in turn gives them foresight and enables them to reach out and grasp things towards which they feel naturally orientated as a result of this prior knowing. Our expectations are already established since musicians have lived in a world in which these things have already been understood. Musicians have *heard* Bird, Miles and 'Trane playing over the blues, and understand the direction in which the form takes. Musicians can approach the modulation to the subdominant in

the fifth bar since musicians have a prior foresight and this enables them to situate themselves and effectively use the ready-to-hand materials which offer themselves as equipment for the pursuit of musicians' aims.

Trumpeter Ben Adamson described how he developed his vocabulary and style, in a discussion following one of his performances at *Lunaria* in October 2003:

> One trick that I use: when I'm listening to a solo or soloist that I like I'll transcribe parts of the solo that I think are really hip. I'll find out the right chord changes at that time and then I'll transpose the licks to different keys and slowly begin to incorporate them into my own playing. After a while of playing them you'll begin to play them with your own twist. Everybody will tell you that in learning to improvise, transcribing solos is so important. It's not easy, but you will learn so much more...I always say that good licks to start with are Clifford Brown playing 'Sandu' – start by singing along with the whole solo. Learn to really sing it...articulations, everything. Next, try to write out the parts you can hear with the most ease...build from there...learn to play the solo along with the recording, then play it from memory with the recording. (06-10-03)

Mark Small also commented that:

> Just spending your time listening to music prepares you for improvising. It gives you the ability to anticipate certain chords and resolutions, certain rhythmic ideas and ways to phrase and things like that. A lot of what you play when you improvise just comes from, you know, being part of the whole world of jazz, listening to it and absorbing it, like at a deep subconscious level so that when you're playing you don't even have to think about it. (email correspondence 09-09-03)

It is through the elucidation of these pre-structures of understanding provided by the customs of a tradition that one can begin to interpret.[72] During a post-rehearsal discussion in February 2003, Nick Keller considered the ways in which rules can facilitate improvisation, but ultimately should not be seen as the basis of it:

> Rules, just like being tied down to a chart, do not limit that imagination. I guess any creative act is bound by some limit or rule. There is no such thing as a completely creative act because everything has to follow from something before it. So creativity is a matter of how loose do you want your rules? But inevitably, how will you stretch the rules that must already be there?...When I improvise I always try and overcome the limitations of having to read a chart. When we're talking about memorizing charts, yes it's much easier to put a meaningful melodic phrase together when I'm really hearing the changes and not distracting myself with the visual appearance of the chord symbols. (27-02-03)

By acknowledging in this way that a solo is not built up around the conscious arranging and rearranging of pre-composed structures in the course of performance, we can begin to understand the solo transcribed in chapter 4 over the changes to 'There Will Never Be Another You', less in terms of *bricolage* and more in terms of the ways in which we are oriented towards playing particular phrases at particular points in the progression. Unencumbered by the intellectual representation of the chart, one can 'really hear' the changes. When musicians improvise they 'listen' to the changes and respond to what they hear in them, like Heidegger's example of the carpenter following the shapes slumbering in the wood (1962 [1927]). The music

[72] This insight enables us to escape a potentially vicious and alienating circle in which we are at the mercy of our fore-structures, imprisoned by our own tradition. Indeed, such a position would not enable us to recover any moment of production from the post-structuralist critique of formalism outlined above.

enters the improviser's dwelling with all the riches of its nature, and involves *Dasein*'s interaction rather than simple 'work' from the outside. Without relating to the music and letting it be, '...the craft will never be anything but empty busywork' (Krell 1993: 379). The being of the music is thus uncovered.

To illustrate this further, Jason Goldman drew my attention to the constraints which the pedagogical aim of 'learning things in all 12 keys' imposes on the beginning improviser. During our interview at USC in December 2002, he emphasised that there is a big difference in simply being able to transpose ideas, progressions and melodies into all 12 keys. Indeed, he alluded to this as 'busy work' which undermines the functions of melodies and harmonic progressions:

> Learning a tune in all 12 keys means that you can do just that: learn a tune in all 12 keys! I mean, you know, what real use is that? It's much more important to know your way around a progression and understand what it is trying to do and then you can kinda react to that and make a good solo. Just memorizing changes doesn't tell you anything. Cats think that a song is just a set of chord symbols that they've, like, got imprinted in their memory. But knowing a tune is knowing all the forms that are in it, all the different implications and sounds and colours you can bring out of it. They never tell you this stuff in school. You've just got to work it out for yourself. (10-12-02)

Clearly, this perspective supports my notion that the improvised performance is a 'world' which enters our dwelling via the 'groove' (or is disclosed through mood) and which manifests itself with all the riches of its nature which involves *Dasein's* interaction, rather than the imposition of consciousness.

Thus far, I have attempted to consider the ways in which musical phrases are intimately connected with being. Thus, we can begin to re-evaluate the significance of the jazz vocabulary and move beyond the dualisms of form and content, structure and experience and immanent designs and their transcendent surplus. The intimacy of these read-to-hand tools which help disclose our being-in-the-world, do not stand at a formal distance from the process of improvising, but are inseparable from it.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Improvisation as Imitation and Interpretation

Introduction

In the remainder of this dissertation I consider, in light of the various compositional, contextual and phenomenological dimensions of jazz improvisation that I have interwoven throughout, the extent to which it is possible to build a model that identifies the relationship between formal structures and cultural realities, and analytical precision and ontological testimony, and to extend the dimension of improvisation to that of self-knowledge and self-understanding.[73]

Rather than considering formal structures in jazz improvisation as a point of departure from which the proper study of culture can develop, I attempt to blur the distinction between formal analytical models and cultural meaning, which in turn collapses the perennial distinction in musicology between the internal and external dimensions of music, and the related distinctions between representation and reality, inner time and outer time (Schutz 1964), experienced sound and visible symbols (Cook's 'two sides of the musical fabric' 1990: 122-160), or what Derrida referred to as the difference between the *ergon* – the work itself – and the *parergon* – that which is outside the work.[74]

My central claim is this: that improvisation has a heuristic function in our cultural lives. By releasing our productive imaginations, we discover in the world

[73] Monson describes this as the 'perennial problem of the relationship of formal structures to contextual and cultural issues' (1996: 186).

[74] Derrida writes: 'This permanent requirement – to distinguish between the internal and proper sense and the circumstance of the object being talked about – organises all philosophical discourses on art...This requirement presupposes a discourse on the limit between the inside and the outside of the art object' (1987: 45).

something that could not be previously described.[75] In this way, we can begin to understand the relationship between formal structure, our being-in-the-world and cultural identity as a dialectical one, and it becomes possible to suggest that improvisation is a tool or medium through which this relationship is productively re-presented.

Music and cultural meaning

How can we ascertain the cultural meaning of music? Ethnomusicologists have been dedicated to bearing witness to the cultural efficacy of music, its ability to accompany rituals, establish social relationships, symbolise community and to make society happen (Seeger 1987), yet while we accept that music is a cultural phenomenon we are still confounded with what it means. The recognition that music serves as a cultural marker which represents ethnic identities or accompanies rituals, only takes us so far in finding meaning and cultural significance in music in spite of its non-representational, or self-representational status.

To find the meaning immanent in music itself, rather than looking outside to the cultural world for denotative references, I pursue the theme that originated in the previous chapter that concerns itself with the ways in which improvised performances give us a world. Improvised musical performances mediate reality; their mode of presentation shapes the world in which we exist and enlarges our experience of being.

[75] Kant (1969 [1790]) distinguishes between the *reproductive* and the *productive* imagination. The former is based on the association of previous experiences, while the latter synthesises experiences into organic wholes. In improvisation, we can distinguish between an approach which emphasises the mere reproduction of patterns, and a productive illumination which generates new ideas through a creative synthesis. The classic metaphors associated with these imaginations are, for the reproductive imagination, Plato's image of the mirror reflecting the sun, and for the productive imagination, Kant's image of the lamp projecting its own light from within human subjectivity (1969 [1790]). As Kearney notes, these images are subsumed by the post-modern metaphor of circular looking glasses – 'each reflecting the surface images of the other in a play of infinite multiplication (1998: 8).

From this fundamental thesis, it is possible to understand improvised jazz music's cultural efficacy and significance neither in terms of a closed system of signs, nor in terms of something extra or anterior to the music, but in terms of a reality in the making.

In other words, in my attempt to understand improvised music's meaning and the cultural legacy to which it attests, I avoid the notion that in order for something to refer to something it must take on the form of an ostensive reference. The idea of ostensive reference has preoccupied our search for meaning in considering the value of aesthetic works.[76] However, if something only *means* if it refers to an external reality, it essentially becomes expendable. Similarly, if improvised music merely mirrors or imitates other African American forms of cultural discourse, as a generation of scholars have argued, it cannot reference anything new in reality; it becomes dispensable and has no role in shaping reality or in offering mediation between an existent world and a prospective one. Thus, it is necessary to consider improvisation and aesthetics more generally, in terms of the *productive* imagination – that capacity to work in creating, transmitting and preserving meanings and values.

If we consider that improvised musical performances, by virtue of their semantic autonomy – their ability to structure themselves in their own space through a formal configuration – suspend ostensive references in order to engender a metamorphosis of our ordinary experience of reality, we no longer need to frame the problematic of music's non-representational status in terms of ostensive references.

[76] In other words, from this perspective, a painting refers to a tree, an improvisation refers to a conversation and the jazz language refers to African American ethnic markers. This perspective posits that art forms mirror reality and reproduce cultural patterns that already exist in the real world rather than attesting to a unique reality of their own.

It has far too often been the case that, in finding music wanting in terms of a reference to the real world, we supply one, often in the form of sociological markers. Indeed, the so-called 'New Musicology', encumbered by the need for worldly representation, reverses the old formalist musicology's claim for absolute meaning and self-referentiality by simply adding on meaning. This process fundamentally neglects the ways in which the music itself is productive of meaning (rather than the social reality to which it reflects). Thus, when the formal attributes of improvising musicians' storehouses are assessed according to sociological markers, as I demonstrated in chapters 5 and 6, very little light is shed on the ways in which a jazz vocabulary, as a symbolic lineament of a human effort to objectify its meanings and values, brings before us a reality in which we participate and continue to interpret meaning, and in front of which we form a cultural self-understanding.

It is through a symbolic understanding of this jazz language that I wish to pursue the remainder of this dissertation, and upon which I base my dialectical model for jazz improvisation. As a symbolic system, the jazz vocabulary gains its value in its ability to present a reality that re-presents musicians' efforts to orient themselves meaningfully in the world. Furthermore, it is via these efforts that a culture begins to understand itself. This symbolic system, as a discourse, is where musicians find themselves already present to a reality provided by others. This symbolic system, far from being a reified abstraction of the flights of the imagination of great artists, is always prior to the subjective experience of improvisation.

Reconsidering 'Giant Steps'

In order to elucidate these claims into the symbolic character of improvisation, I have found it useful to reconsider the ways in which the jazz language manifests itself in performance. Once again, I turn to Coltrane's 'Giant Steps' as an instructive example of the ways in which a particular approach to improvisation has been sedimented in the jazz tradition while still fostering poetic innovations. While, in chapters 5 and 6, I described such sedimentation as the discursive reiteration of canonic forms, I now offer an alternative interpretation of the compositional devices that are associated with a tune such as 'Giant Steps', which will hopefully enlighten a much richer cultural process. Sharing characteristics with the text-like work-product, 'Giant Steps' escapes the original contexts of its production and gains an independent afterlife.[77] This independence – mistaken by formal musicologists to represent an absolute autonomy, and deconstructed by so-called 'New Musicologists' due to this conceit – represents a relative autonomy. Its autonomy is dialectically linked to each new listening, transcription and performance of the piece, in which the horizons of the performer or listener merge with those of the work and unleash the imaginative variations of play. Correspondingly, performers and listeners relinquish aspects of their selfhoods to enter into these imaginative variations, and emerge with new and broadened horizons of being.

I chose the recordings transcribed in Figure 1.19 on the recommendation of a number of my informants who were working on that tune at the time.[78] In both the

[77] The notion of a work's independent afterlife is explored by Savage (2004).

[78] The five solos I have transcribed are by highly accomplished saxophonists recognised as exemplars of the modern jazz tradition and a modern saxophone style. They are each highly emulated, and each has helped define contemporary jazz. Furthermore, these musicians – Michael Brecker, Eric Alexander, Bob Mintzer and Kenny Garrett – all consider themselves as belonging to a lineage of

UCLA Jazz Ensemble and the smaller combos, 'Giant Steps' continued to challenge musicians, eliciting a variety of contrasting responses. When I presented my informants with this comparative analysis of the five solos transcribed below, it was striking how they assessed the similarity of style and compositional devices that manifested themselves during the performances. I was able conclude from their remarks that the synthetic, formal structures that characterise improvisation are directly linked to the transmission and preservation of particular meanings and values that lie at the centre of the jazz culture. This observation led in turn to the observation that improvising is a form of cultural self-representation.[79]

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saxophonists whose paternal authority is John Coltrane, whose original solo is also transcribed here. All solos are transposed to correspond with the B♭ tenor saxophone.

[79] Transcription formed a large part of my methodology but is far from an activity confined to musicological analysis. The study of recorded solos has comprised a vast proportion of both my study and practice routine and, as a research tool, my academic understanding of jazz improvisation. Often, musicians will develop a portfolio of written transcriptions, while at other times they may simply note certain phrases they enjoy and proceed to learn them in a variety of keys and apply them to a variety of musical contexts. By virtue of the luxury of repeated listening and concentration to detail, transcribing has enabled me to 'slow down' the real time performance and understand the ways in which accomplished recording artists construct solos. I have often found this to be an intensely frustrating but ultimately rewarding process. After careful, repeated listening to these versions of 'Giant Steps', for instance, I both consciously and unconsciously gained a richer understanding of the players' vocabularies and a better grasp of the challenges presented by Coltrane's composition. Removed from the performance context, transcribing illustrates the requirement of analysis for successful improvisation. In other words, while transcription occupies a central place in both traditional musicological and ethnographic analyses, for jazz musicians there is a clear hermeneutical process involved in transcribing, in which the arc between explanation and understanding, and analytical precision and ontological testimony is strengthened; the seemingly 'objective' analysis of transcribed structures is transformed into a heuristic model for improvisation.

Essentially due to computer font limitations and a desire for clarity, most ornamentation, slurs, cracked notes, etc. have not been reproduced. This is consistent with the majority of published transcription collections (see for example Parker 1978). For me, the biggest difficulty in transcribing jazz solos involves finding ways to reflect the nuances of swing that characterise jazz phrasing. It is generally accepted that a transcription represents the notes played but is unable to illustrate how they were articulated (see Jairazbhoy 1977 for a discussion of the limitations of traditional approaches to transcription). Nevertheless, for the purposes of elucidating the analytical properties of the jazz language and its symbolic manifestations, I felt it necessary to represent transcription from the 'emic' point of view of the jazz musician whose blurring of the role of analyst and performer restores some efficacy to the 'objective' view and its productive relationship to the culture of jazz improvisation.

Figure 1.19 'Giant Steps'

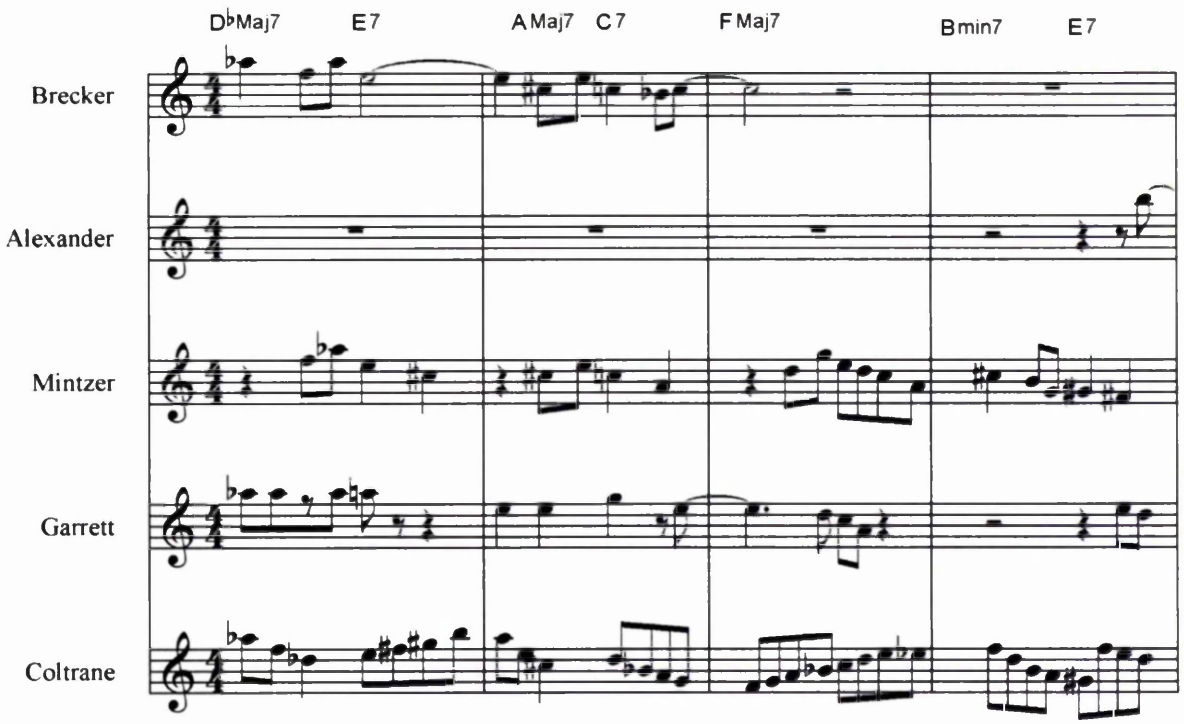
Michael Brecker solo on 'Giant Steps' by John Coltrane. (*Twin Tenors*: *Bob Mintzer and Michael Brecker*. Novus B000008MR8. Recorded New York, NY, 28 June 1994.)

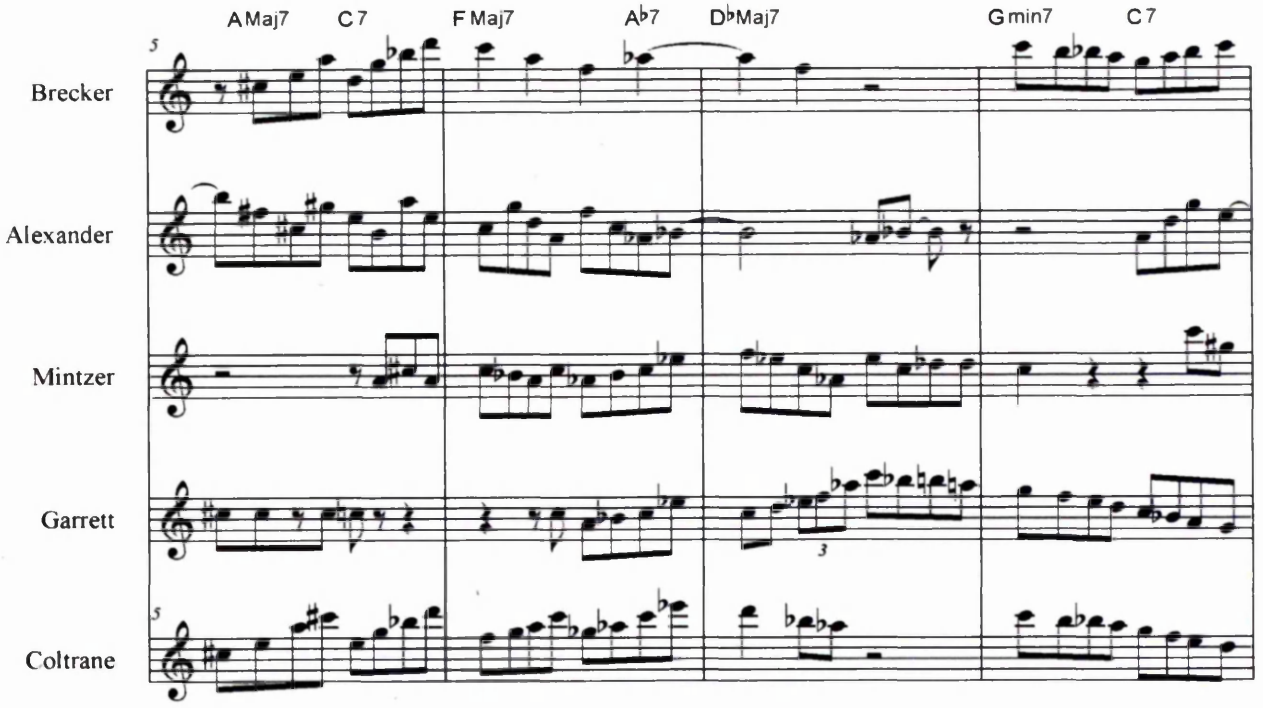
Eric Alexander solo on 'Giants' from John Swana's arrangement of 'Giant Steps'. (*New York-Philly Junction: Joe Magnarelli and John Swana*. Criss Cross Jazz 1246 CD. Recorded: Brooklyn, NY, 3 November 2003.)

Bob Mintzer solo on 'Giant Steps' by John Coltrane. (*Twin Tenors*: *Bob Mintzer and Michael Brecker*. Novus B000008MR8. Recorded New York, NY, 28 June 1994.)

Kenny Garrett solo on 'Giant Steps' by John Coltrane. (*Triology*: *Kenny Garrett*. Warner Bros Publications. 9 45731-2. Recorded New York, NY, 1995.)

John Coltrane solo on 'Giant Steps' by John Coltrane. (*Giant Steps: John Coltrane*. Atlantic SD 1311; 8122-72399-2. Recorded New York, NY, 1 April 1959.)

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D♭Maj7
Gmin7
C7
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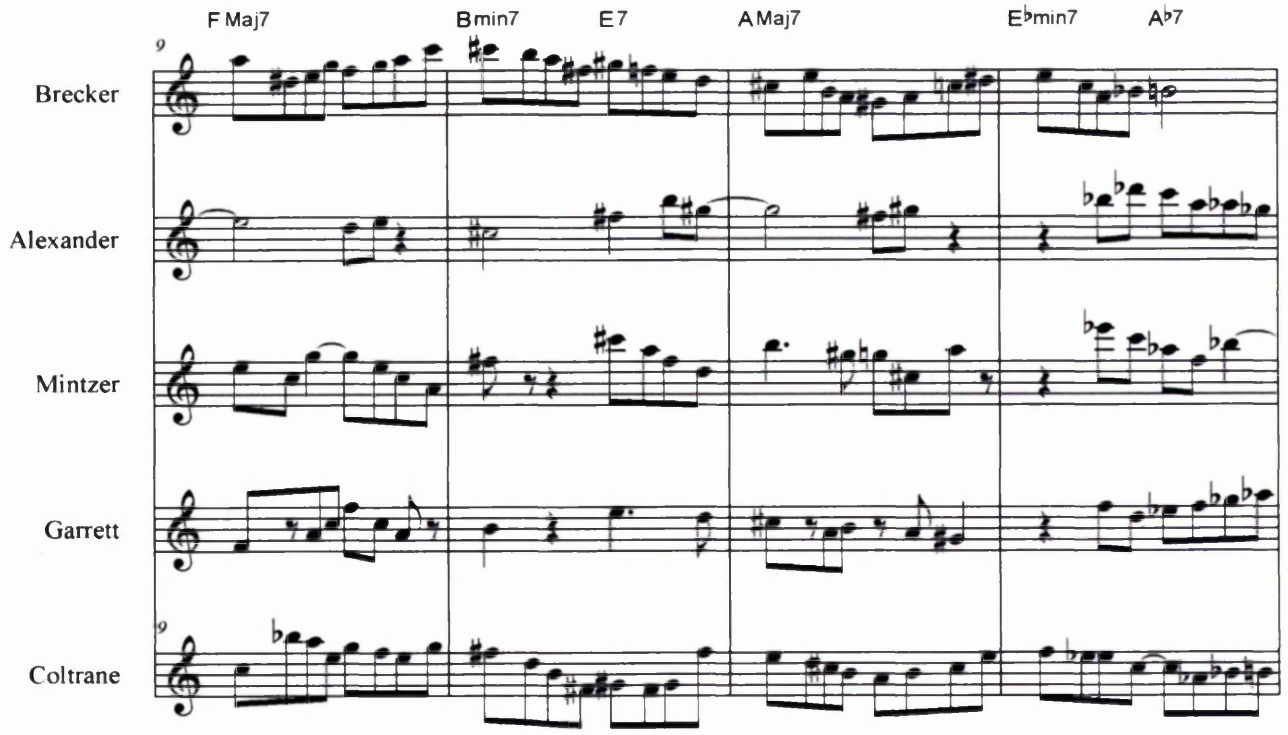
Alexander
Mintzer
Garrett
Coltrane
5
3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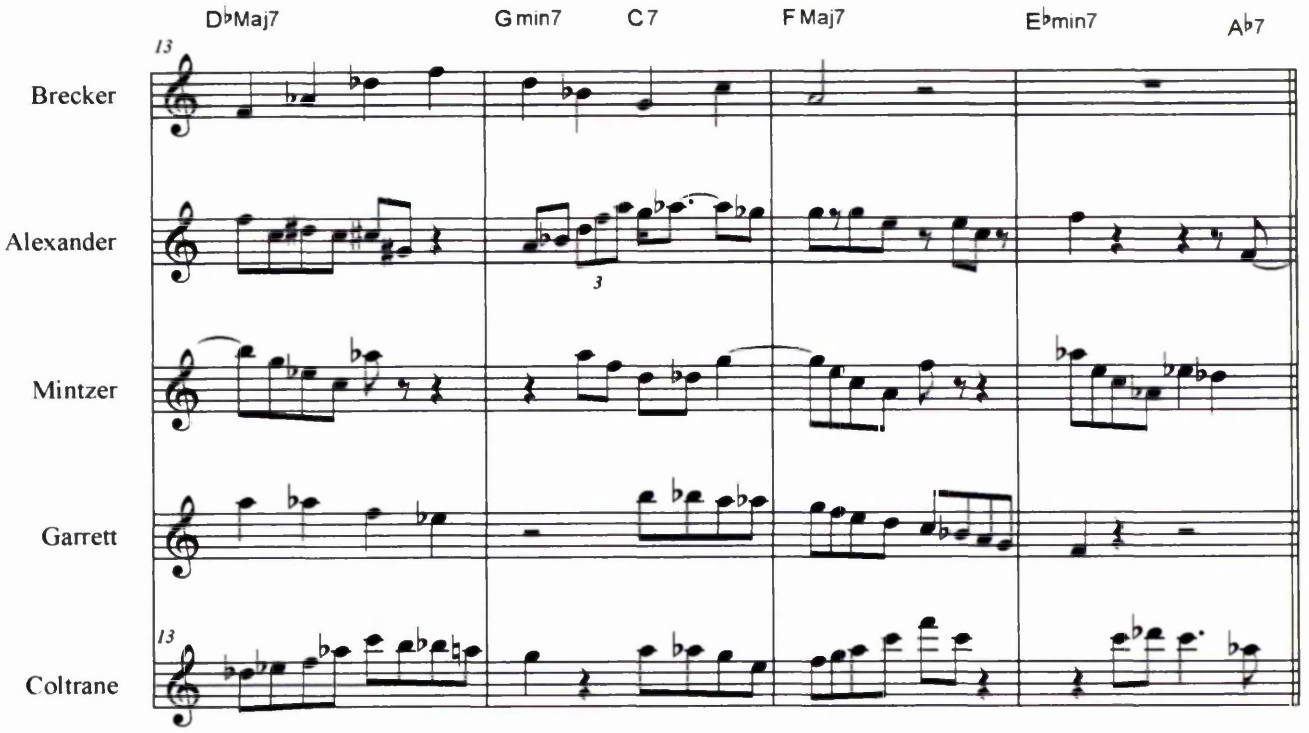
9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Coltrane
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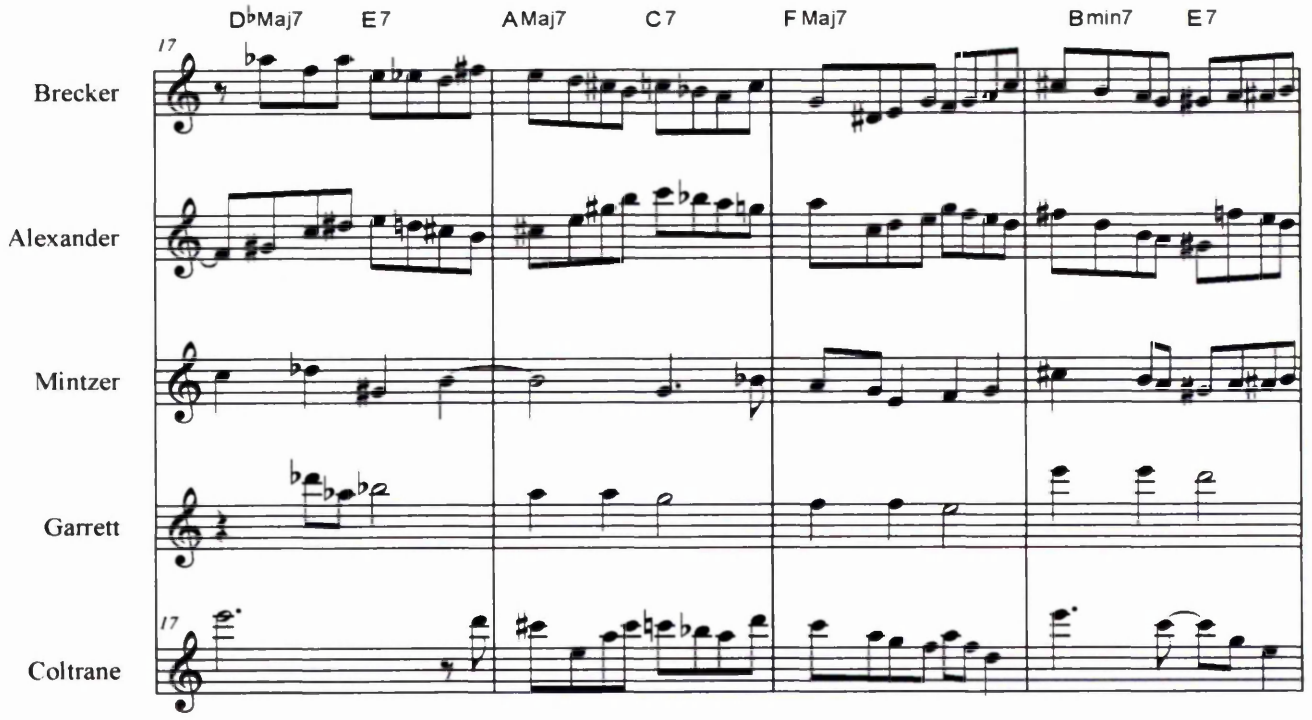
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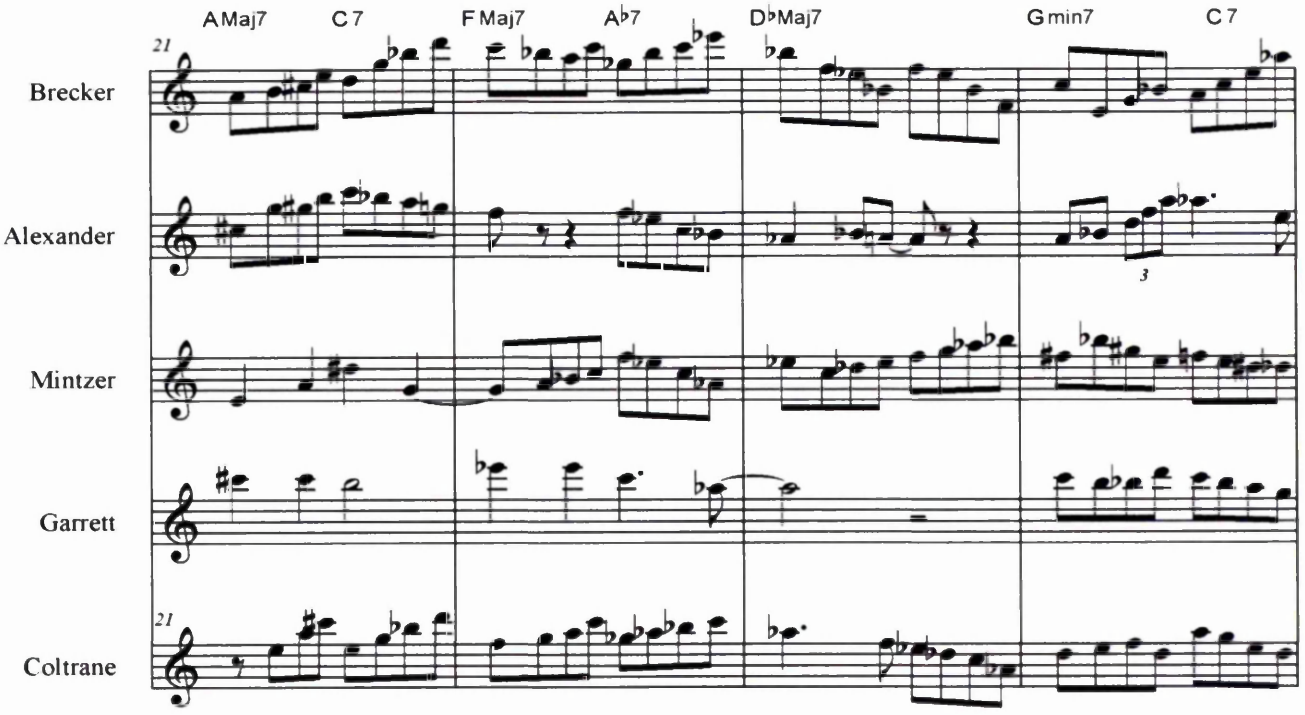
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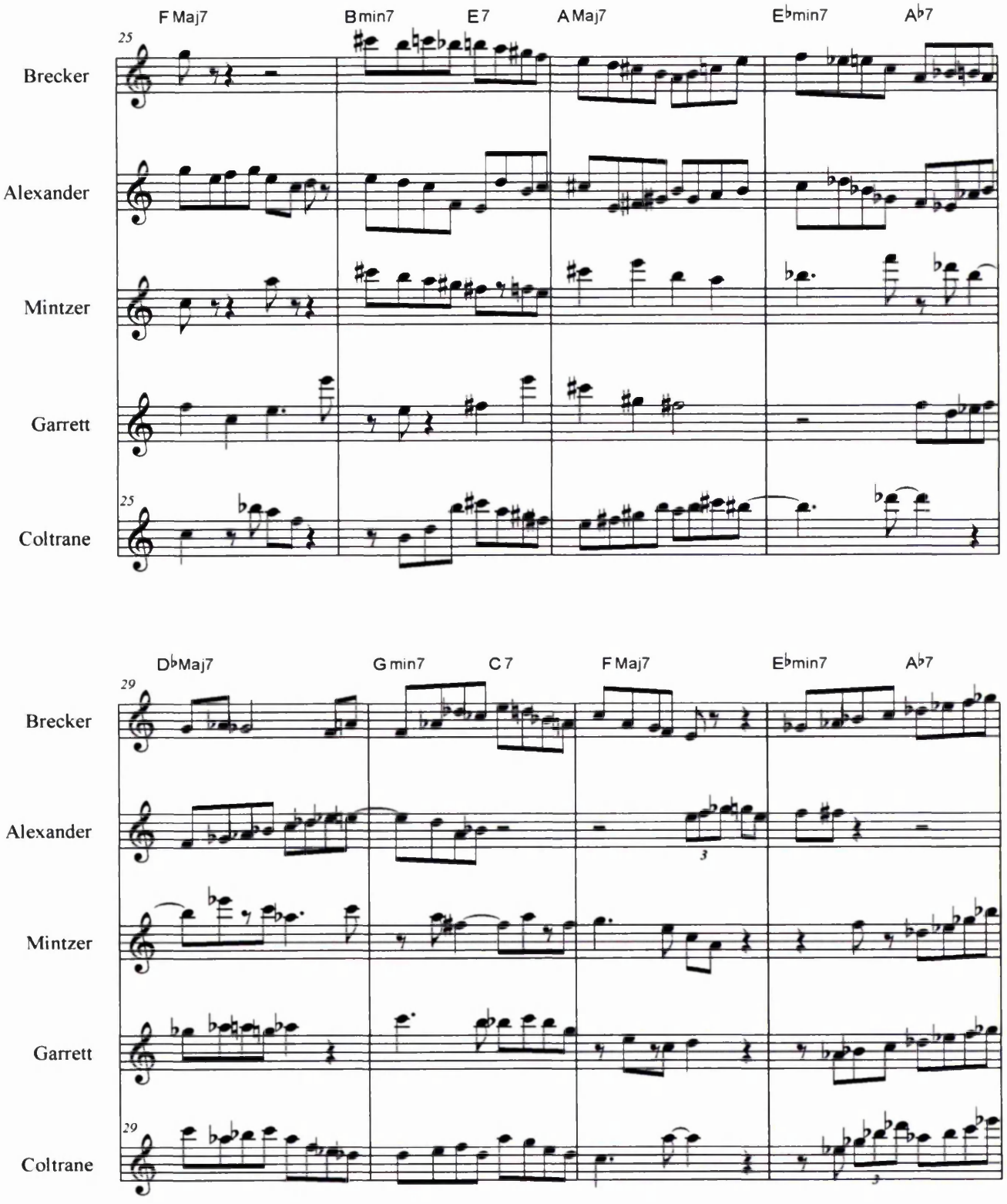
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A♭7
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Mintzer
Garrett
Coltrane
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D♭Maj7
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Garrett
Coltrane
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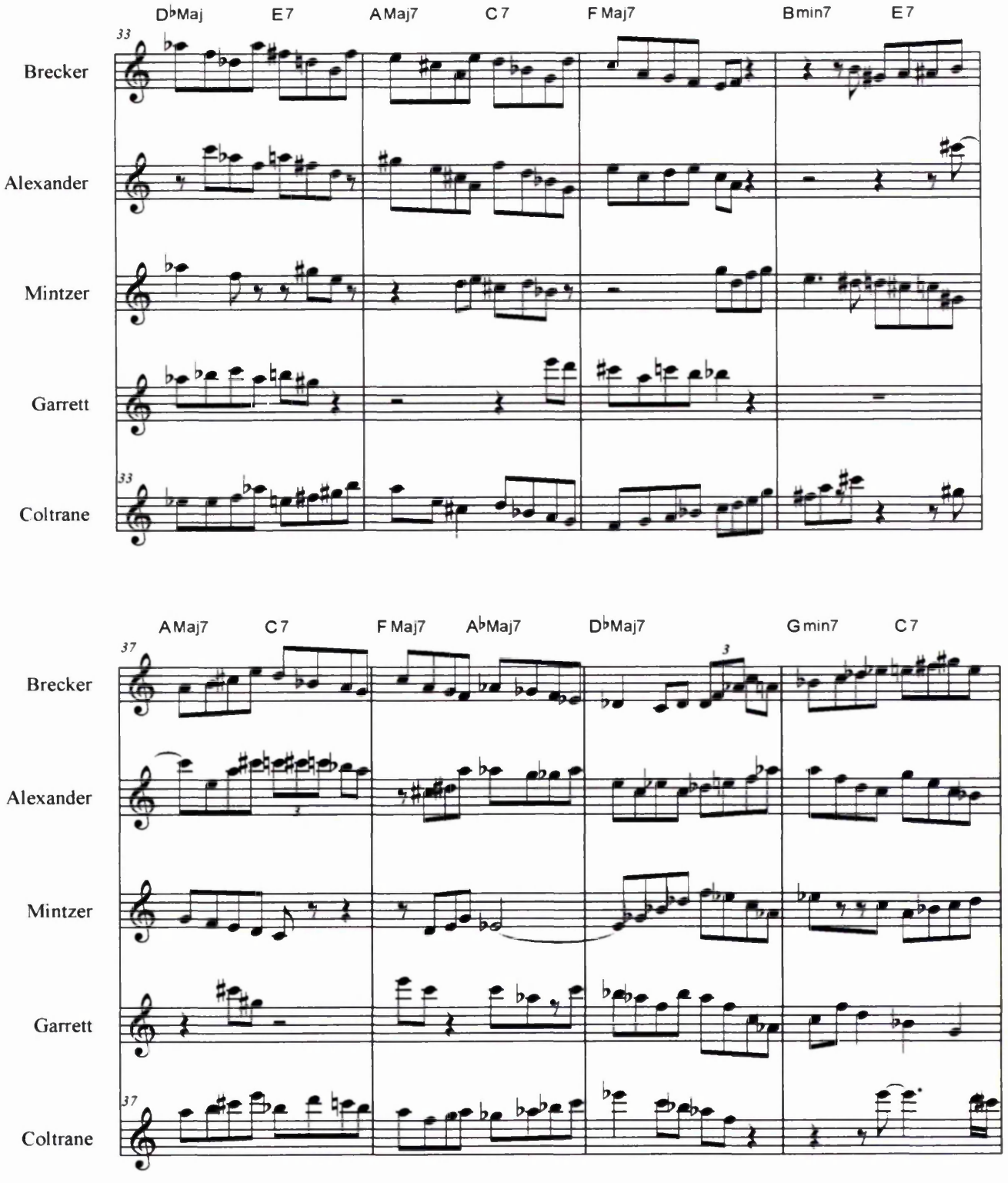
3
3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Garrett
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C7
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Coltrane
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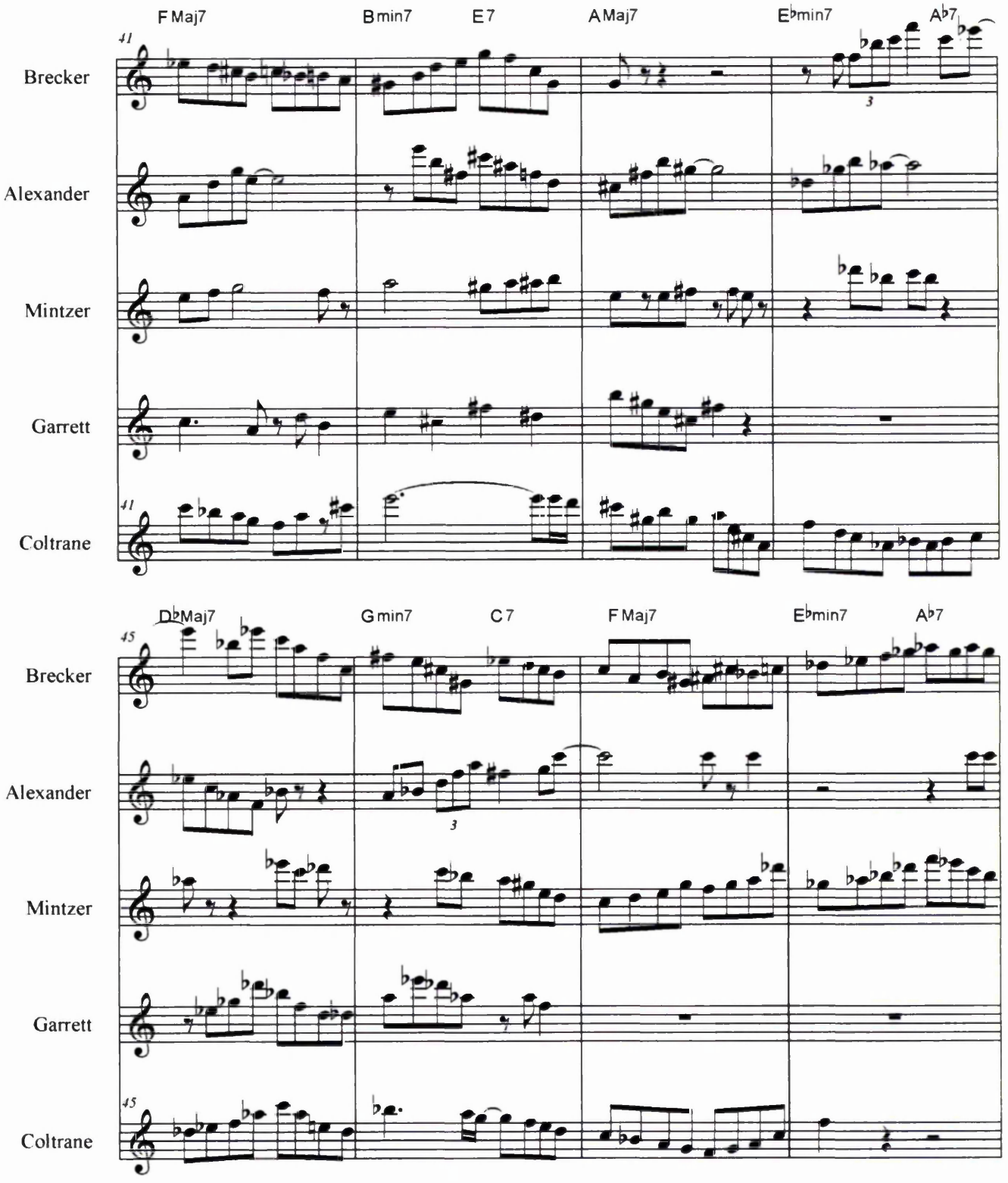
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Garrett
Coltrane
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D♭Maj7
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F Maj7
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A♭7
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Alexander
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Garrett
Coltrane
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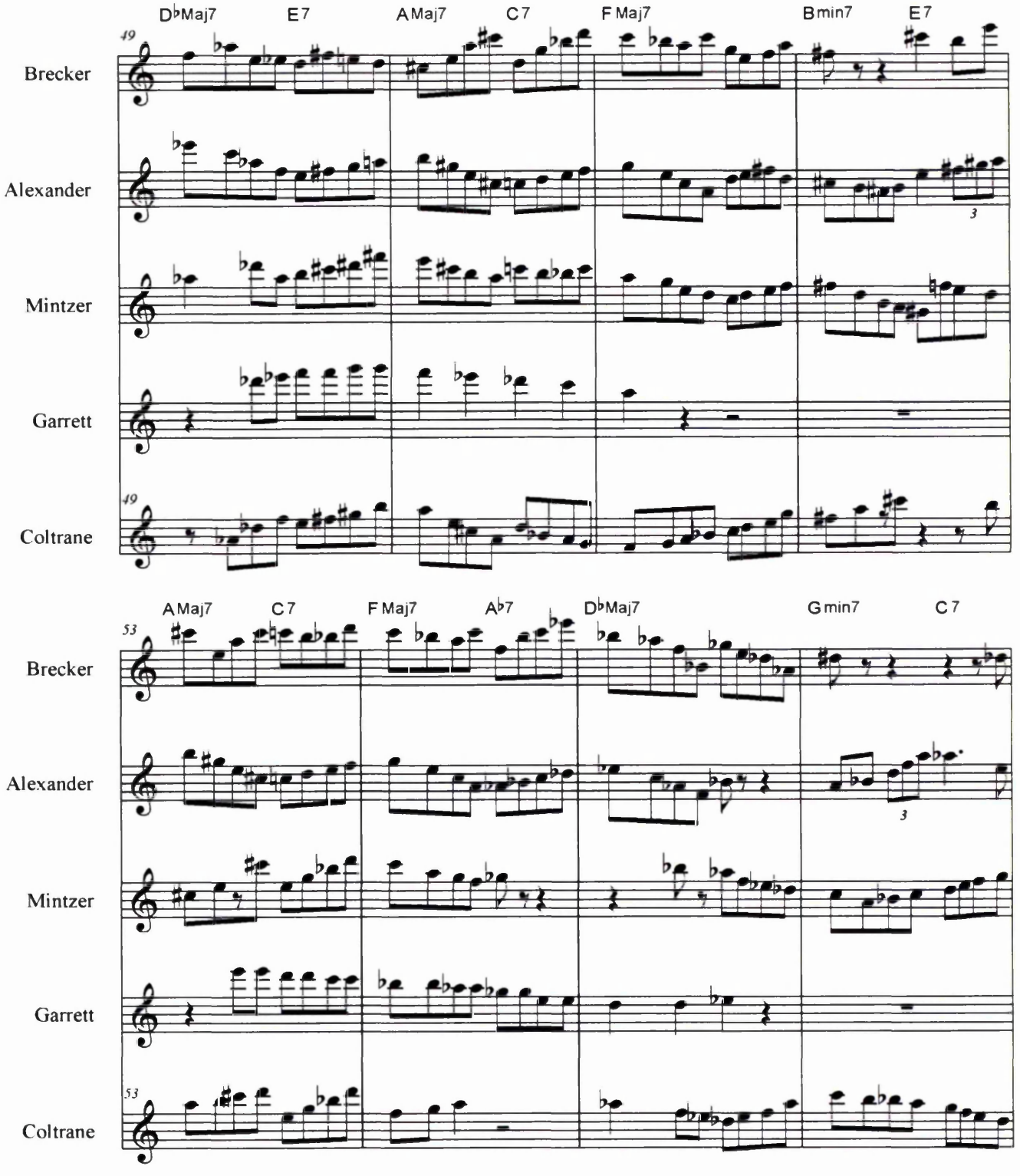
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Gmin7
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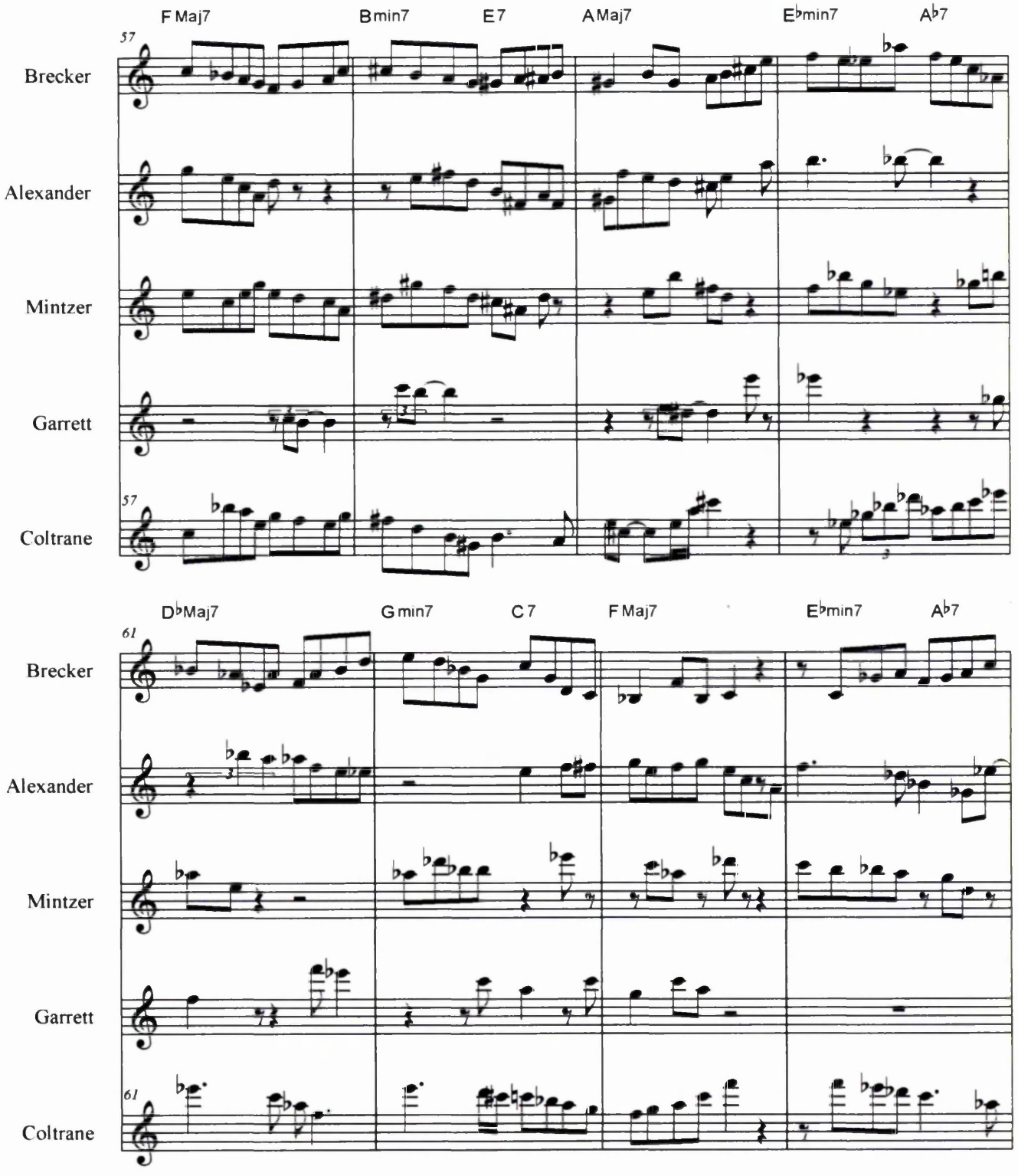
Garrett
Coltrane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A♭7
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Garrett
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A♭7
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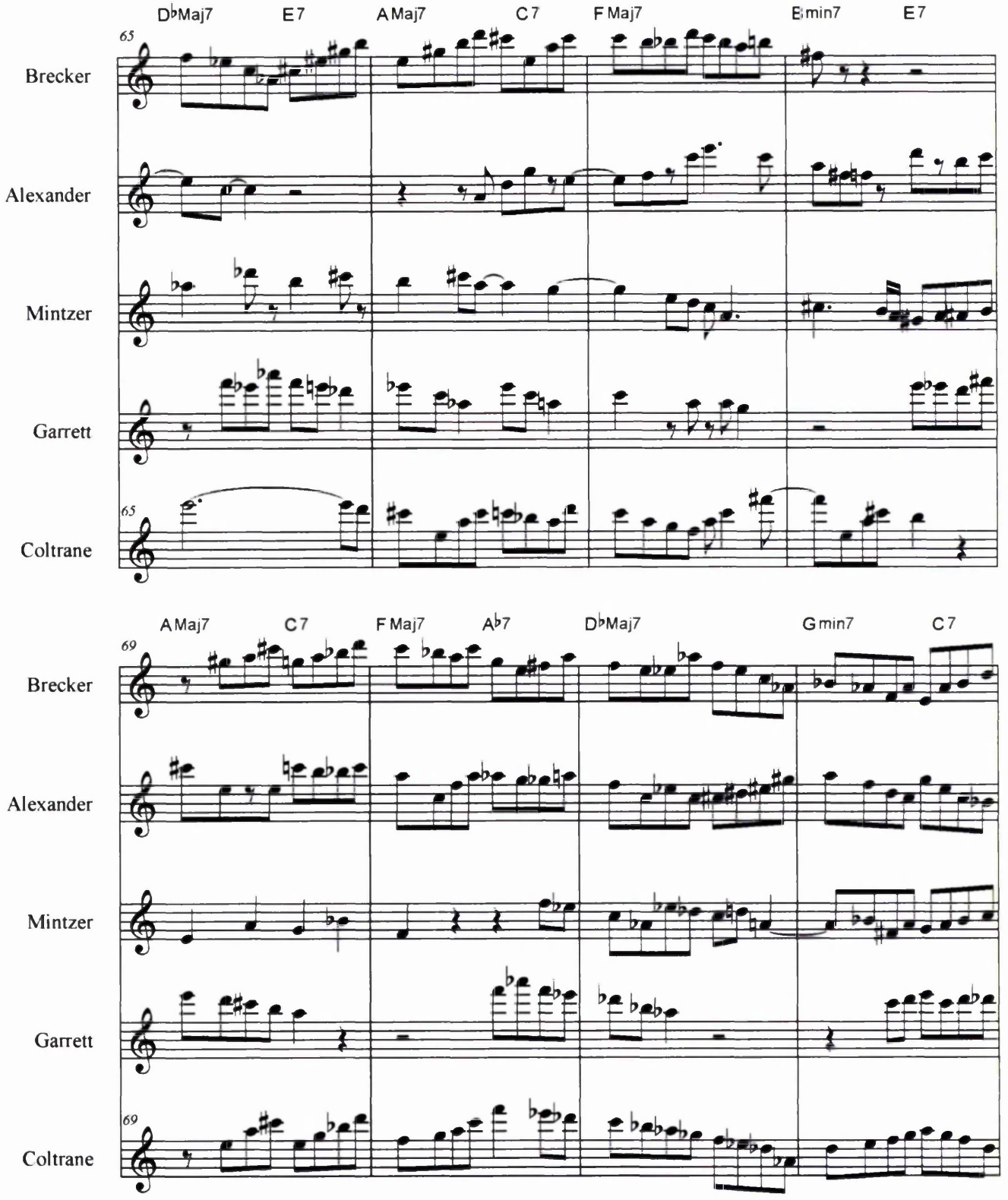
Garrett
61
Coltrane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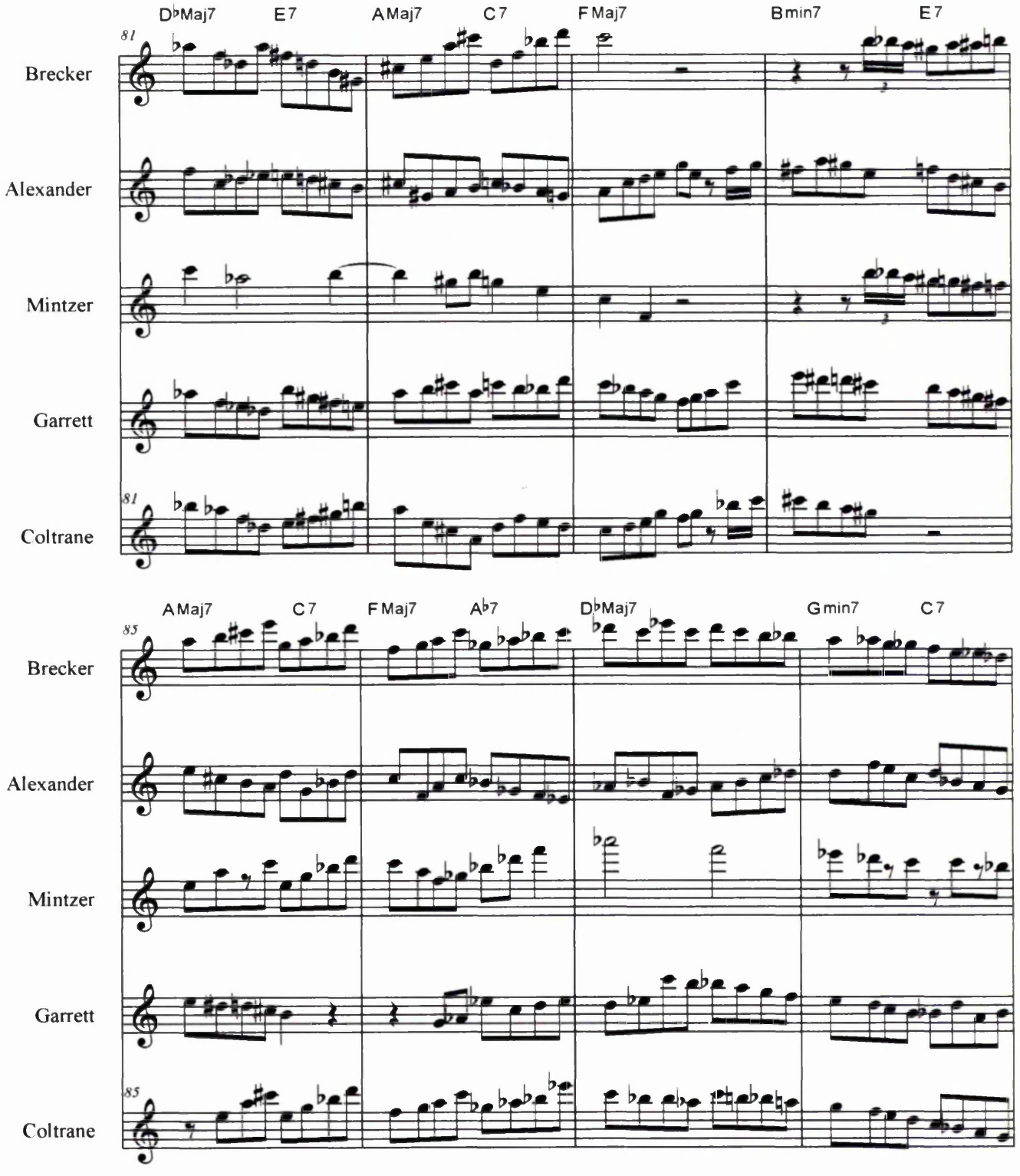
Garrett
69
Coltrane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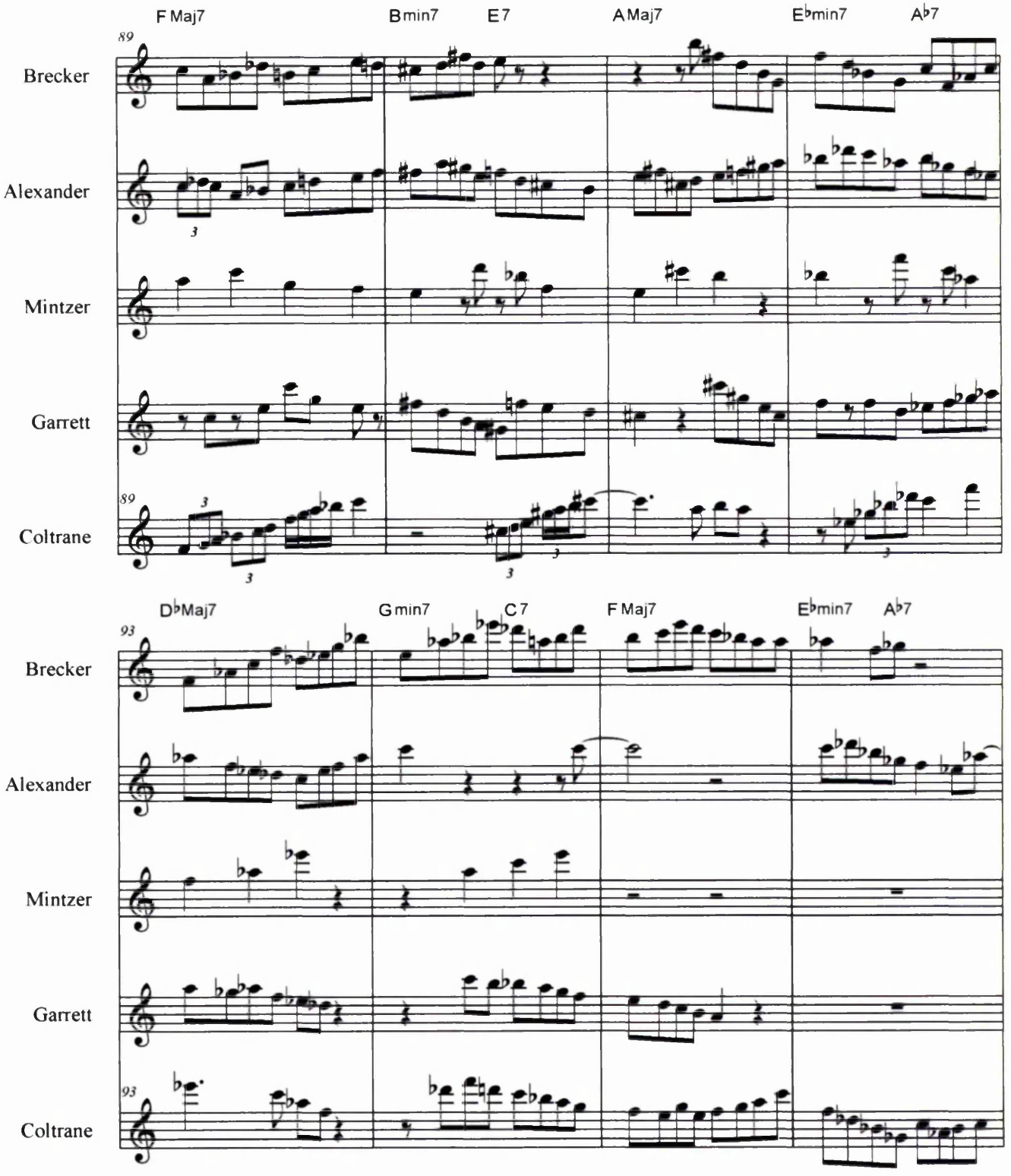
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Garrett
Coltrane
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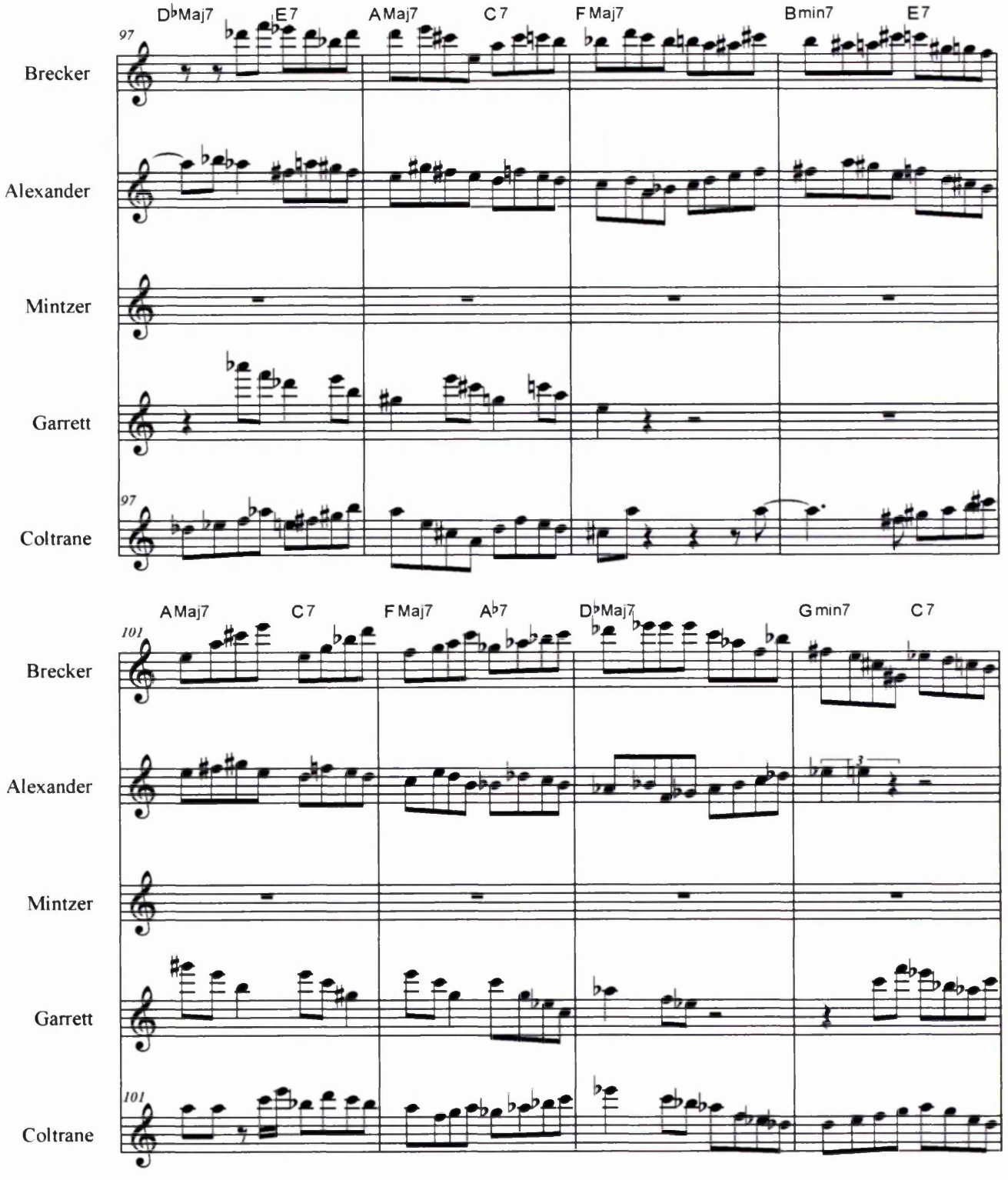
Coltrane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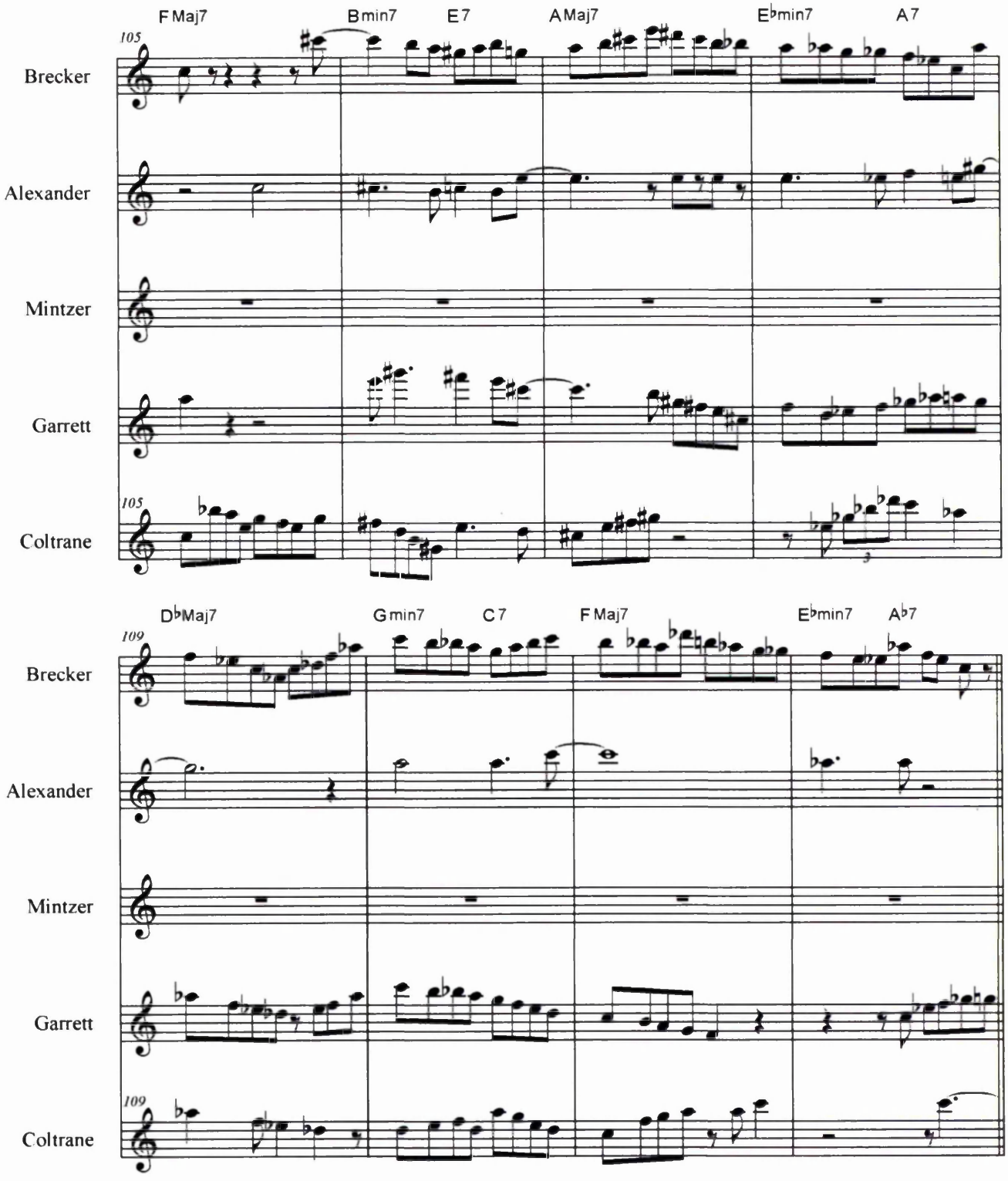
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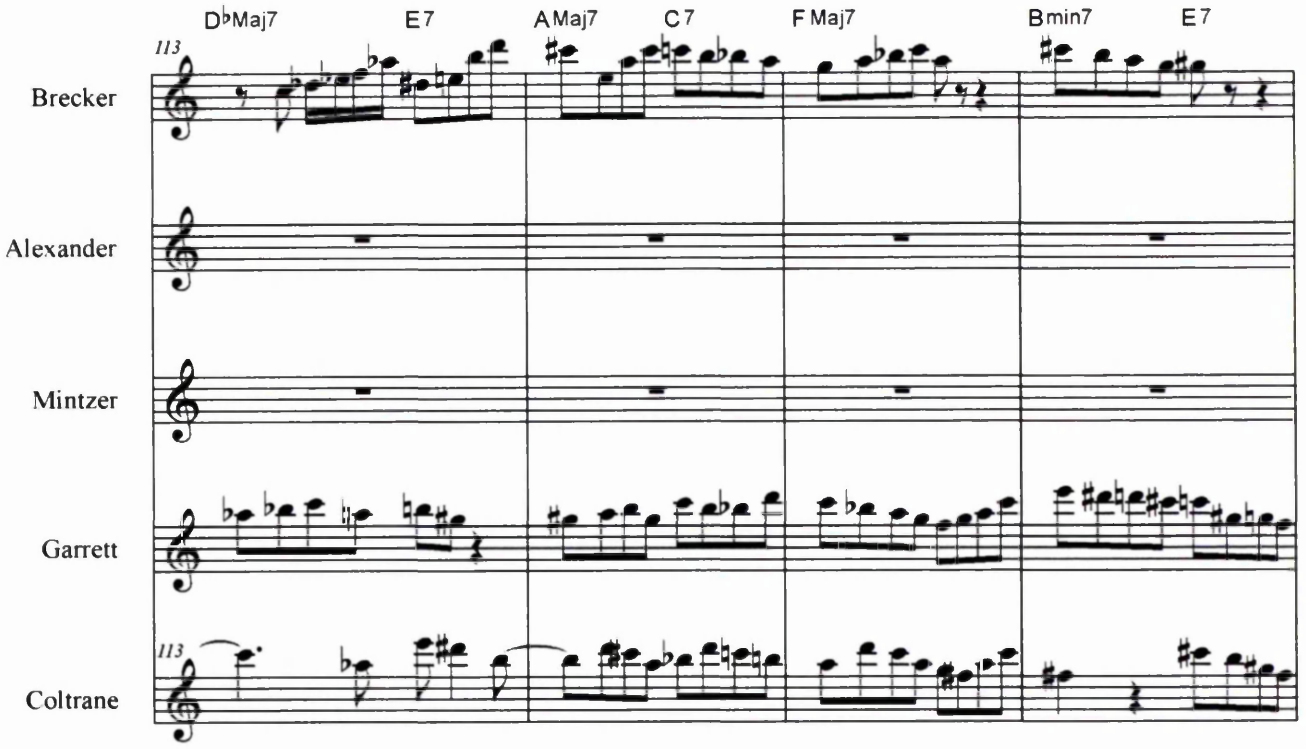
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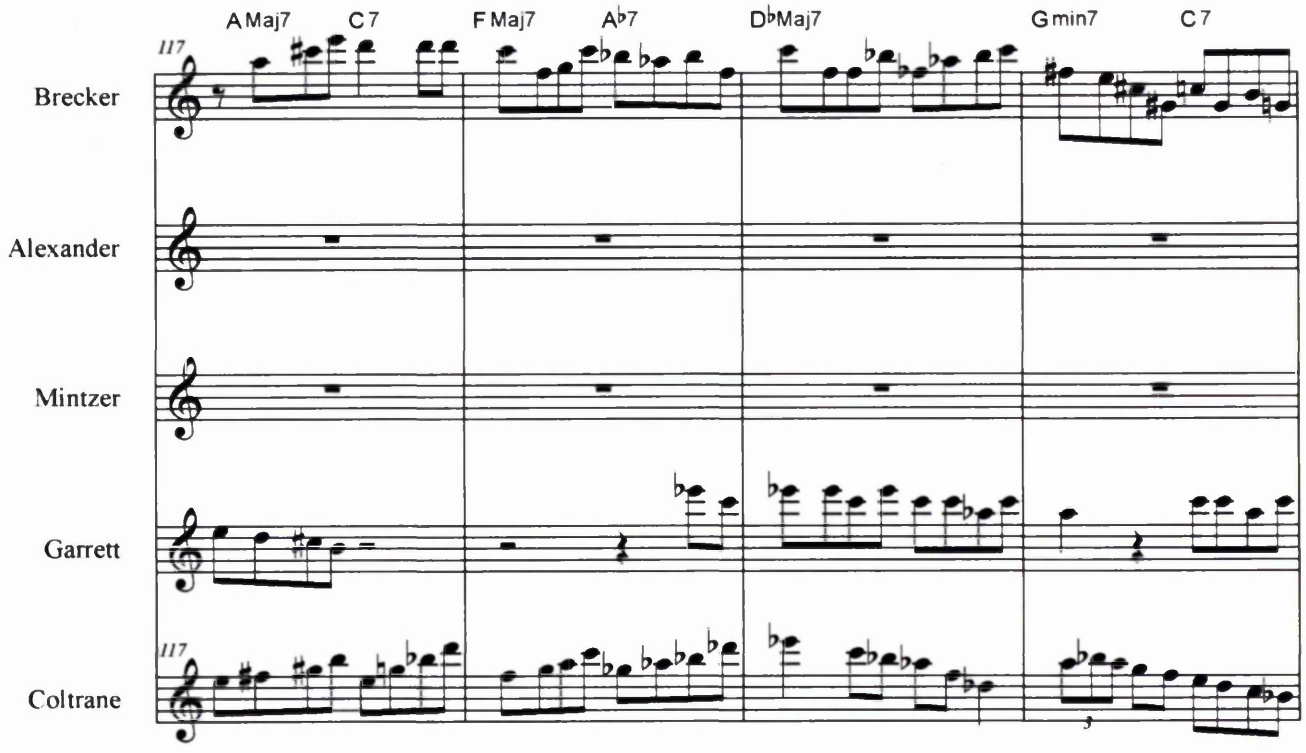
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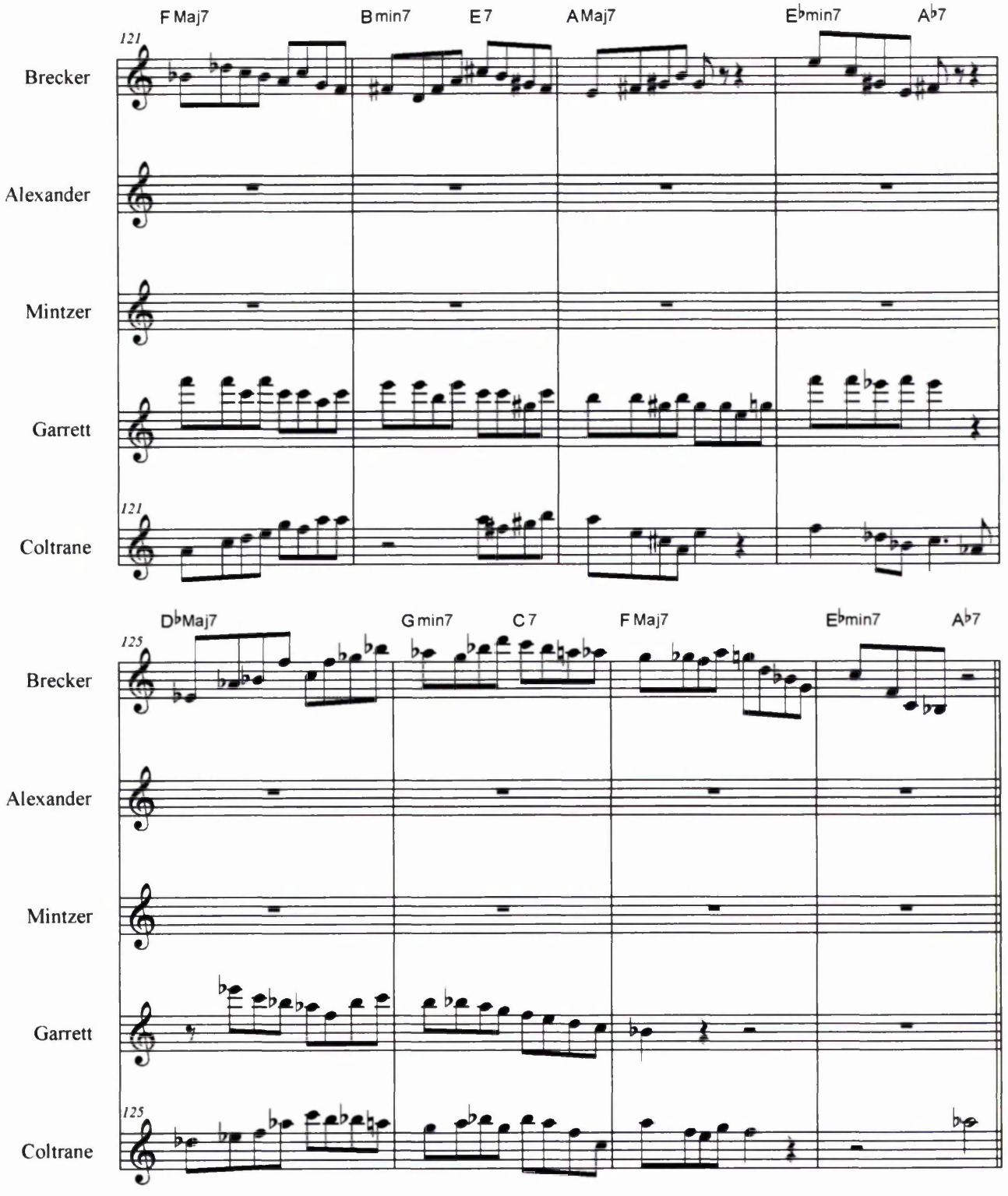
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Mintzer
Garrett
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Coltrane
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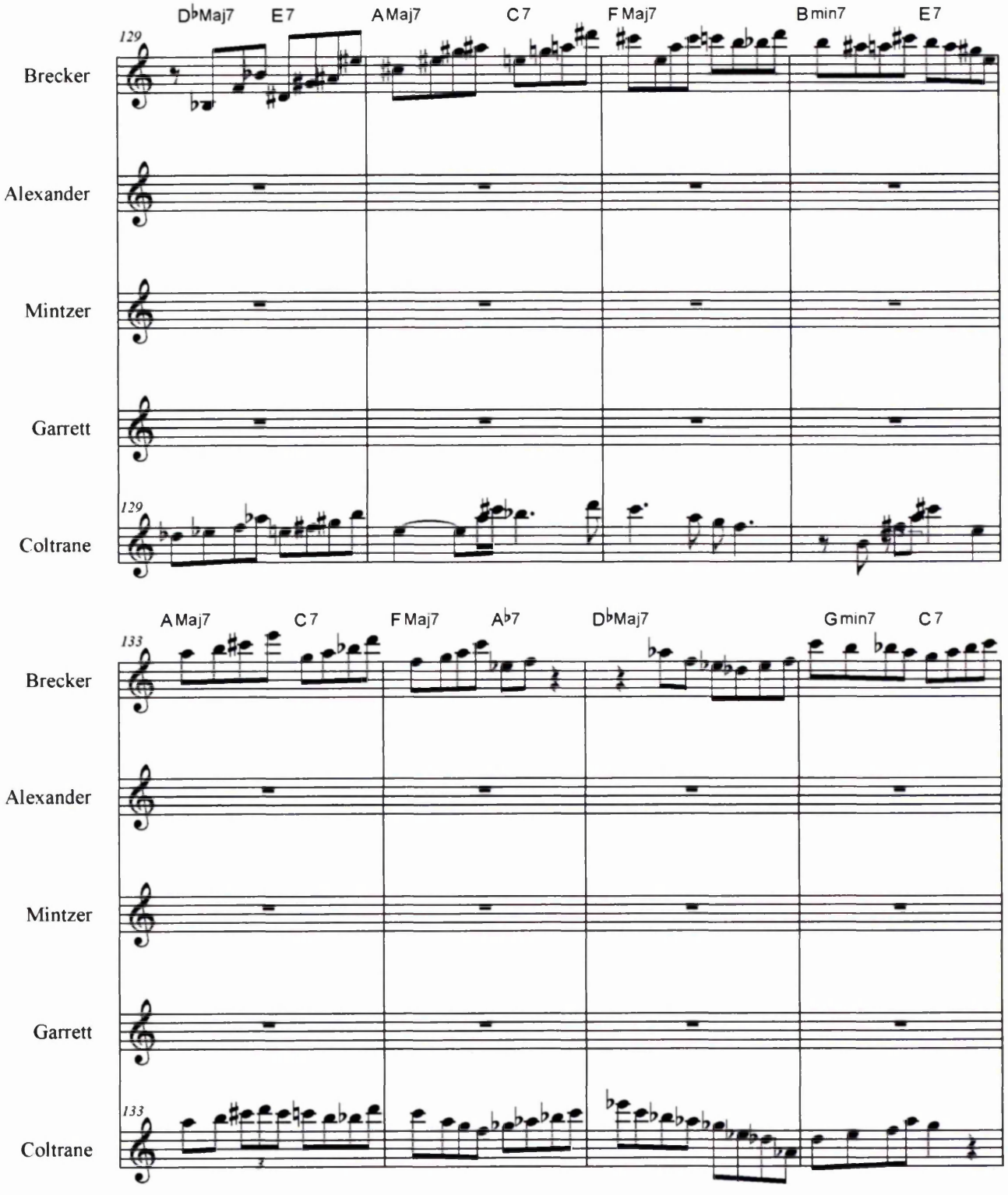
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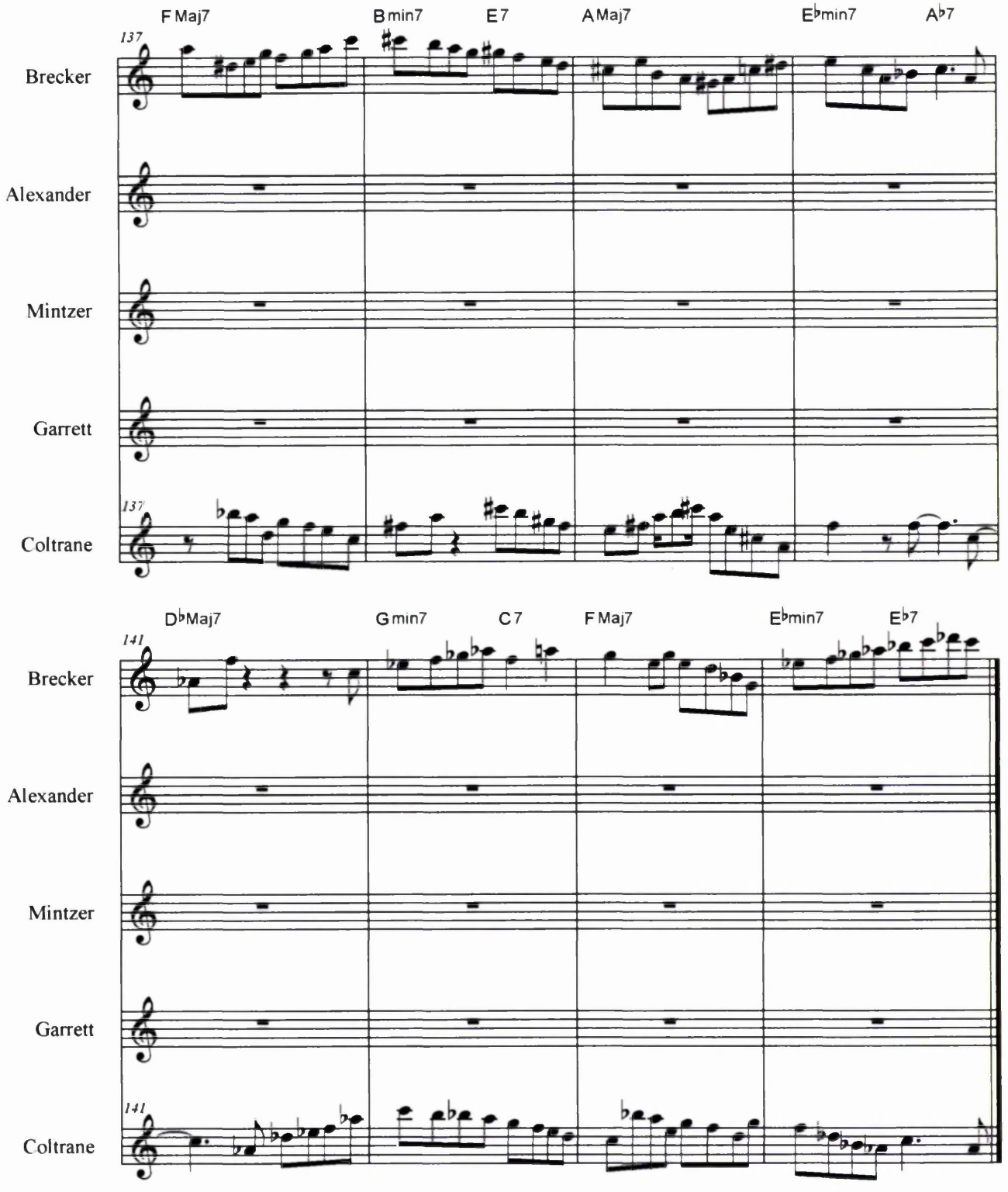
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Garrett
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137
D♭Maj7
G min7
C 7
F Maj7
E♭min7
E♭7
141
Brecker
Alexander
Mintzer
Garrett
Coltrane
141

Recalling my earlier chapters, the analysis of jazz has diverged according to a formal analysis which elicits an objective explanation of how jazz improvisation works – the model of the *bricoleur* is instructive in elucidating the relationship between improvisation and formalist design – and a social explanation, which deconstructs the formal aspects of analysed jazz improvisations to reveal their contingency upon society, and analyses the social rather than the musical. This latter perspective was reinforced by the alignment of particular paradigmatic improvisations with the *Werktreue* concept within the Western art music canon. Such a comparison of performances such as 'Giant Steps' in turn elicited annotations on performativity in terms of ideological complicity, and encouraged me to consider 'Giant Steps'' status as a material aspect of cultural reality – a socially constructed artefact contingent upon historical and cultural meanings and ideologies – within the jazz community.

This *Werktreue* critique of 'Giant Steps', in which the emergence of the work-concept in jazz coincides with bourgeois aesthetics and institutionalised culture which in turn generates standards of legitimacy and symbolic capital, held some sway with my informants and, as a consequence, motivated me to consider undertaking an analysis of the social forces that improvised music reproduces and reiterates in the course of performance. From this perspective, 'Giant Steps' becomes a kind of cultural weapon which takes advantage of certain ideals such as complexity, while masking the power struggles that operate beneath it. 'Giant Steps', as a work-concept, would thus contribute to a form of cultural and symbolic violence instrumental in reproducing power hierarchies within society.

However, a hermeneutical reflection of the power exercised by the imagination proposes an alternative insight to the deconstructive insight that canonic, work-like artefacts represent a form of symbolic capital in the struggle for social position and power. While the critique of improvised music's role in advancing hegemonic notions of prestige for privileged individuals sheds light on its role as a weapon, this critique ultimately acts as an impediment in recuperating a jazz aesthetic and poetic. The laying bare of imperialist and discursive constructions in canonic works such as 'Giant Steps' simultaneously reduces the improvised performance to an ideological matrix whose aesthetics is denounced as socially pernicious, and eclipses its aesthetic autonomy and its ability to encounter us as performers and listeners and to challenge us with a potential for new understandings.

Thus, a recovery of a productive understanding of 'Giant Steps' entails an exploration of the intersection of the world of the text ('Giant Steps') with the world of performance, which in turn unfolds new realities. Ever since Coltrane's solo was inscribed in the jazz tradition, it gained an independent and autonomous existence from the context of its initial performance and, as such, it has distanced itself from the cultural context of performance. Correspondingly, by virtue of this distance, each time 'Giant Steps' is performed in a new and different context, the horizons of the performer are extended to incorporate those of the world of the text. Thus, reality is transcended from within. Improvisation, therefore, is a dialectic between the music, embodied in a text, and the contemporaneity of its performance and reception. We are invited to experience 'Giant Steps' in constantly new and different ways. As a consequence of this encounter, we emerge with an enlarged sense of ourselves. A performance's capacity to address us within the horizons of our experiences by virtue

of the communicability it has summoned, takes it away from the social conditions of its production and endows it with a much more productive, dynamic power of refiguring our experiences and shaping self-knowledge.[80]

In order to explore this claim more fully, I have included below a selection of informants' responses to the comparison of the five solos of 'Giant Steps' transcribed above, made during our discussions of these performances following our combo rehearsals at UCLA.[81] Following this, I include my own brief analysis which identifies the similarities that emerge through such a comparative transcription.

> Yeah, it's pretty amazing that the solos have a similar kind of approach [to tempo, harmony, rhythm, etc.]. When you play a tune like 'Giant Steps', often I'll be thinking, probably unconsciously, of all the other versions I've heard and the ways in which they've dealt with it and then, you know, make my own interpretation. It's not that different from playing classical music, really. (Ian Vo 03-10-03)

> It's not really that much of a challenge to play 'Giant Steps' so there's no reason to think of it in any different way from the blues or 'Rhythm Changes'. The point is, that you bring to the performance what works and then...well, with me, once I'm in the groove, it just goes in whatever way that it goes. There's nobody telling me what to play. But I have to get my shit together before I'm playing it so I did a lot of shedding on [Coltrane's] recording. It's obvious that they've [the performers transcribed above] done the same and they've held on to

[80] This insight enables a hermeneutical analysis of improvised music to overcome the limitations of the previous models: the neo-Kantian insistence that taste is denied any importance as a mode of knowledge, and the so-called 'New Musicological' denouncement of any productive power a performance has in affecting reality.

bits of the original that they really like while, you know, developing their own sound at the same time. (Nick Keller 21-09-03)

Sure, Coltrane showed us this new way of playing, but that was based on Dexter Gordon which was based on Bird, which was based on Lester Young. So all these cats have, like, set up...where they're coming from. So playing 'Giant Steps' in a certain way shows that you've come from the same place, emotionally and intellectually because we all belong to the same tradition. You can't step outside it. (Isaac Darche 03-10-03)

Yeah, well, of course it's not 'cause these cats don't have anything to say and they're...forced to just fit in a pattern or copy 'Trane. I mean, these cats are some of the...best saxophone players around. I mean, it's not like a choice. Kenny's not thinking that he's gonna play that ii-V in that bar, and it doesn't matter if he keeps playing it throughout his solo. It's more like its coming from the music that he understands and its telling him to play so he plays it because he knows it will work. (Grant Peters 24-09-03)

Everyone knows Coltrane's solo inside out. I mean, it's a classic. So all these musicians would have transcribed the solo at some point in their career and this is like their individual take on it. (John Ritchie 15-11-03)

'Trane's solo is timeless. It's like a composition and...learning it tells you all these new things about jazz. I guess any standard is the same and different people have different ways of playing their own voice, but there's always some continuity. I mean, the way Miles plays 'My Funny Valentine' is totally different to Chet Baker because they've got different things to say with the music but it's still 'My Funny Valentine' and it's timeless too. The reason people keep playing tunes like 'Giant Steps' and standards is because there's so much to get out of them...there are always new places you can go if you open

your ears to the music, but if you don't engage with it and make your own thing out of it then yes, it will just be like reiterating. (Will Clarke 22-10-02)

Careful listening and study reveals an array of similarities between the solos. What is remarkable is the identical phrasing and harmonic and rhythmic direction each solo evidences, especially towards cadence figures which endow the solo with a sense of an ending and resolution. The following is a handful of examples to illustrate my point: From the first bar, there is an obvious correlation between the solos as each gravitates around the A♭ and F♮. Moving into the second bar, each performer (excluding Alexander who has yet to begin his solo) outlines the key notes of the A major triad before modulating to F major via C7. This cadential figure recurs throughout the harmonic framework and is a defining feature of 'Giant Steps'. It is interesting to observe the similarities between the soloists in dealing with this sequence in particular. In bar 5, Brecker and Coltrane play an identical figure. Brecker repeats this figure in bars 21-22, 50, 82, 101, 130 and 133, often coinciding with Coltrane in the original recording (see bar 21 for example). Mintzer joins in with this figure in bar 53. In bars 50-52 there are resemblances between each soloist in the extended sequence: |Amaj C7 | Fmaj |Bm7 E7|. Notice how in bar 52, Mintzer employs a phrase already played in this context by both Coltrane (in bar 4) and Alexander (in bar 20). And later, in bar 90, Garrett plays the same figure.

In the more conventional context of the ii-V-I into F major, in a majority of the cases, all soloists use the bebop scale or a variant of it. The bebop scale is a simple scale, often heard in descending motion, in which the 7th note is both flat and natural. In an F major ii-V-I progression, the bebop scale is based on C7 using the

following notes (written in descending order): C B♮ B♭ A G F E D C.[82] In bars 8, 14, 24, 56, 78, 94, 110, 126, 136 and 142 there are instances of this figure. The cadential ii-V into D♭ major also often yields similar patterns. Most striking is bar 32 in which all the soloists play an identical pattern.

In comparing these solos, it is useful to consider Ricoeur's characterisation of the imagination according to the dialectic of innovation and sedimentation (1984: 68-70). This dialectic is central to the cohesiveness of a community since it simultaneously bears witness to the 'exemplary' texts or narratives that become a legacy within our cultural memories and traditions. In order to avoid falling into dogma, this respect for tradition is complemented by the projective capacity of imagination to disclose new possibilities.[83] This dialectic is represented in the transcriptions above and follows a continuum: Garrett's solo is the most significant departure from Cotrane's original solo, and represents the side of innovation while, it could be argued, Brecker gravitates towards sedimentation. While Garrett's solo fosters a range of innovations through rhythmic variation in particular, he still gravitates towards sedimented paradigms. His repeated use of the altered ascending scale followed by the descending bebop scale over the progression: | E♭m A♭7 | D♭ maj7 |Gm7 C7 | Fmaj7 | in bars 12-15, 28-31, 76-79, 92-95 and 108-111, illustrates the ways in which he refers to a sedimented typology of emplotment. Brecker, on the other hand, repeatedly employs standard bebop and post-bop vocabulary throughout his solo and thus recollects types throughout his solo: he uses the bebop scale in bars

[82] This is useful as a cadential figure since the C most often resolves on the first beat of the I chord.
[83] Ricoeur writes: 'The labour of imagination is not born from nothing. It is bound in one way or another to the tradition's paradigms. But the range of solutions is vast. It is deployed between the two poles of servile application and calculated deviation, passing through every degree of rule-governed behaviour' (1984: 69).

8, 78, 110 and 136; a variation on a bebop ii-V in bars 10, 20, 58, 74, 100, 116, 132 and 138; an F major lick in bars 9, 19 and 137; a four-note descending motif through bars 1-2 and 33-34; an inversion of the four-note pattern in bar 49; another four-note descending motif in bars 85-86 and 101-102; and a D♭maj7 lick in bars 23, 55, 93 and 125. Innovation in improvisation remains to be a form governed by rules. Yet, every solo always involves *poeisis* and *play* by virtue of the space opened in the encounter between the horizons of the text and the horizons of our world.

An analysis of this sort is more informative than Coker's method of simply reifying particular patterns, since it enables us to make the observation that particular phrases provide modes of intelligibility which in turn are sedimented into a tradition and endure within a culture's self-understanding. Simple litanies of phrases, structurally arranged in terms of a *langue*, and having no reference to the contextual circumstances of *parole*, provide us with no understanding of the emerging relationship between experience, structures and cultural self-knowledge. Thus, we can begin to consider a model of improvisation that combines analytical precision with ontological testimony.

To conclude this reconsideration of 'Giant Steps', it is worth recalling that it pushed the standard chord changes of the popular song to the limit and presented a new set of challenges to the improviser. Despite this, its popularity has endured and it has become a canonic work within the jazz community. One of the most notable features of Coltrane's solo is its formulaic nature. As a result, it becomes possible to isolate aspects of Coltrane's solo and to decipher structural relations, formulaic variations and other text-like properties that remove the improvisation from both the

course of performance and from its cultural context. In essence, it gains the status of a musical work. However, rather than renouncing any claims for aesthetic autonomy this work has engendered, and rather than attempting to interpret the development of canon according to the discursive operations of power – in which it gains social relevance in terms of its exclusivity and complexity – I believe it is more productive to understand the symbolic values that the work embodies as products of the social imagination.

Since this work enjoys an afterlife beyond the context of its initial performance, it can be said to have attained a degree of autonomy. However, this autonomy is relative. By comparing Coltrane's initial solo recording with more recent versions – both recorded and heard in countless jam sessions in cities around the world – a number of similarities emerge which suggest that Coltrane's original has become sedimented in the jazz tradition. With this in mind, can we not suggest that 'Giant Steps' represents a *working*, through which the identity of a culture is negotiated? Paul Ricoeur notes that 'imagination at work – in a work – produces itself as a world' (Ricoeur 1991b: 123). Correspondingly, could we not argue that 'Giant Steps' is a 'work' which, each time it intersects with our own cultural horizons, augments our understanding of ourselves and our world? It is in this intersection that a world, configured by the work, emerges. Thus, 'Giant Steps' should neither be conceived of as the object for formal analysis nor as a cultural artefact of sociological analysis. Rather, the ontology of 'Giant Steps' is renewed in its self-presentation in the mode of *play*. As I shall discuss further below, it is in our encounter, as performers and listeners, with the text-worlds inscribed in the repertories, frameworks and standards of improvisation, that our world is suspended

and we are unable to locate our selves. This forces us to locate our selves in the text-world. The heuristic function of improvisation, then, is to structure both our feeling and our selfhood.

Play: improvisation's mode of presentation

In order to elucidate this dialectical and heuristic process further, I turn to Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of *play* (1994 [1960]). It is through this concept that we can begin to think beyond music's non-representational character and look instead towards its mode of presentation for an understanding of improvised music's cultural efficacy. This point of departure entails a wealth of new areas of inquiry into improvised music. One of the most fundamental aspects of improvisation's mode of presentation is the related function of 'groove' – which I have discussed earlier in terms of mood – and temporality, which I shall discuss later in terms of narrative. For now, I intend to discuss in general the idea that it is in playing music, in improvising, that the aesthetic and cultural experiences that are related to improvisation unfold.

Gadamer identified the phenomenon of *play* as an alternative to the distancing aesthetic consciousness found in the aesthetic attitude of Kant and the formalists. Gadamer's thesis is that the 'being of art cannot be defined as an object of an aesthetic consciousness because, on the contrary, the aesthetic attitude is more than it knows of itself. This is a part of the *event of being that occurs in presentation*, and belongs essentially to play as play' (1994 [1960]: 116, emphasis original).

In other words, rather than understanding improvisation as a repertoire of motifs that stands before us as an object for our consciousness, we should, following Gadamer, understand improvisation as an event of being. It is from this perspective that we can appreciate that improvised music can only be encountered in the playing – in the structuring – of itself as it unfolds in time. Improvised music, therefore, has its own mode of being which addresses us; we are not sovereign controllers of this structuring process; our individual projects are placed into suspension while the performance unfolds.[84] The mode of being structured through *play* mediates between the subject and the object, and initiates a 'to-and-fro' movement that surpasses the control of the player while the player is still immersed in it. In short, through the experience of *play*, 'what is' emerges. *Play* produces and brings to light what is otherwise hidden or withdrawn (Gadamer 1994 [1960]: 112). In conversation with alto saxophonist Jeff Clayton in his studio in October 2002, the notion of *play* was evoked:

> Everything will come out in its own way, at the proper time, in the proper place. Things will unfold. That's guaranteed. Bits and pieces of things will come out and you'll say 'Wow! That's nice!'. And then things will come out more often and before you know it, your playing will be how you want it to be. The music will play *you* and you don't even have to think about it. (05-10-02)

Jason Goldman also acknowledged that the 'story' in improvised performances forms itself in the course of performance:

[84] Gadamer writes: 'when we speak of play in reference to the experience of art, this means neither the orientation nor even the state of mind of the creator or of those enjoying the work of art, nor the freedom of a subjectivity engaged in play, but the mode of being of the work of art itself' (1994 [1960]: 101).

> There's no fixed rules about playing, but people will often come out sounding the same because that's the way the music wants to go. I mean, there's no way that I can have the luxury to think about what I'm gonna play over the next chorus...I get that when I compose, but this is improvising. Even if you have a bunch of ideas, you'll never know what order they're gonna come out, but if you're listening to the music, if you've got big ears, as they say, it'll always sound good. Sure, when I look back on my solo I can identify all of these structures and relationships that look like I've thought about it, but the playing always comes before the thinking.[85] (16-11-03)

Similarly, in an interview with Monson, bassist Cecil McBee made this comment about this nature of being 'beside one's self':

> You can't go [onto the stage] and intellectually realize that you're going to play certain things...Something else is going to happen...so the individual himself must make contact with that and get out of the way. (McBee as cited in Monson 1996: 67)

Travis Jackson also acknowledged that when improvising:

> The self is temporarily suspended and he or she becomes part of something else. What happens at those moments is the core of what is meaningful about jazz performance for performers and other knowledgeable participants. It is one of the major shared understandings of what jazz performance is supposed to be 'about'. (Jackson 1998: 117-118)

[85] This comment accounts for the pragmatics of improvising that arise *from playing*, and suggests that it is rule-governed; however, any notion of form, fixed structure or *langue* presupposes these pragmatics.

Moreover, when accounting for the forming, shaping characteristic of improvisation, it becomes evident that improvisations never exhaust their own function or structure: John Ritchie observed that 'you can go on playing "Rhythm Changes" and spinning out new lines all night!' (04-03-03); improvisation, clearly, is not simply the repetition of another solo (as the versions of 'Giant Steps' bear witness), but there is a sedimentation of structure which brings to presentation what the performance is. While there is no goal, per se, at the end of the improvisation, each chorus renews and repeats itself. Furthermore, each new and different performance of a chord sequence renews and repeats a structuring process that unconceals the music and discloses a world.

By understanding improvisation as *play*, and in particular by acknowledging that the structuring *work* that improvisation achieves as it unfolds – a structure that is often reduced to an a-temporal schemata – becomes the basis for its ontological and cultural vehemence, the predicament which distinguishes between music's representational nature and its experience, between its form and its context, is finally resolved. To bring our experience into improvisation is not to change these experiences into something different; rather, in articulating and developing them, these experiences become themselves.

It is certain that improvisation transposes musical gestures into a structure, and that this structure constitutes a closed world, yet this need not suggest that this world is hermetically sealed off from the experiences it can unfold. Similarly, since it represents a closed world, our tasks as (ethno)musicologists should not be merely to insert meaning from the socio-cultural realm in order to create the crucial link

between formal structures and cultural realities. The transformation into a form does not imply that this form is imposed from the outside; rather, the form is the self presentation of the unfolding relationship between the musicians and the music which represents what Gadamer describes as 'a universal ontological structuring element of the aesthetic' (1994 [1960]: 159).[86] Improvisation's essence is determined by the ability to *play* with the unfolding music, the 'groove', the mood; to evoke an affective presence, and to communicate an aspect of human being-in-the-world concealed from view.

From this brief discussion of *play*, it becomes possible to combine the concept with the ontological state of mood discussed above and its manifestation in the 'groove'. Through *play*, it could be argued, the mood is brought into being; improvisation reveals aspects of our experience hitherto undisclosed. Berliner writes that:

> Within the groove, improvisers experience a great sense of relaxation, which increases their powers of expression and imagination. They handle their instruments with athletic finesse, able to respond to every impulse...At such times, the facility artists display as individual music thinkers combines with their extraordinary receptiveness to each other. It is the combining of such talents in the formulation of parts that raises these periods of communal creativity to a supreme level. (Berliner 1994: 389)

[86]Gadamer writes that: 'The transformation [into structure] is a transformation into the true. It is not enchantment in the sense of a bewitchment that waits for the redeeming world that will transform things back to what they were; rather, it is itself redemption and transformation back into true being' (1994 [1960]: 112).

Pianist Kenny Barron described a similar experience: 'Everything just fell into place in my hands and in my head. I felt I was expressing something with everything I played. When I'm playing well, there's a certain freedom of just being able to do anything, really' (Barron as cited in Berliner 1994: 180). Saxophonist Lee Konitz described improvisation as a 'singing, whistling phenomenon when it's really happening...It's a matter of getting intricately and sophisticatedly involved with a melodic line so that it is one with the performer' (Konitz as cited in Berliner 1994: 180). The idea that the music *plays* us, that a work of art brings itself into presentation, is clearly alluded to here. Bass player Chuck Israels states that: 'No matter what you're doing or thinking about beforehand, from the very moment the performance begins, you plunge into that world of sounds. It becomes your world instantly, and your whole consciousness changes' (Israels as cited in Berliner 1994: 348).

Clearly, a picture is emerging that illustrates the ways in which improvisation is a medium through which we engage with the world. In fact, improvisation is that very engagement. Any perspective that attempts to identify improvisation as the *instrument* through which we engage with a socially mediated world, presupposes the fact that improvisation, like language, provides the very medium itself. The common observation among improvising musicians that a performer cannot intellectually prepare him- or herself for a solo by imposing on it formal schematics, suggests that improvising is a structuring process whose shape and form unfolds through a dialogue between the music and the musicians. Furthermore, the other common observation that being in 'groove' is a 'good place to be', suggests that the 'groove' is

the manifestation of a world, or a disclosure of mood.[87] That the *play* structure of improvisation and its 'groove' are inseparable – the improvisation will not unfold unless it is in the 'groove' – enables us to make the direct link between playing and being, and suggests that improvisation mediates being. Berliner recognised that:

> In their responses to other players, musicians typically seek to preserve a general continuity of *mood*. Beginning a solo, John Hicks listens to the 'spirit coming from the whole group' to determine a 'direction' for expansion that 'contributes to the overall feeling'. (Berliner 1994: 368-369, emphasis added)

Improvisation is not determined by the consciousness which performs, since improvising has its own way of being; improvisation is an experience which transforms its performers. Thus, the subject of aesthetic experience that takes place in improvisation is not the performer but the dynamic structuring operations that take place in the performance. In this way, improvisation more closely resembles a type of dance in which movement itself carries away the dancer (cf. Ricoeur 1981: 186).[88]

Could it not be argued, then, that this dance is itself central to the cultural work that improvisation animates? Is it not in the dance that we can begin making the connections between music and culture? As musicians perform and improvise, they create, preserve and transmit values and meanings which gain an objective status through symbols and represent their efforts to exist culturally. Our cultural

[87] 'Groove' is similar to Keil's (1966) idea of 'vital drive' as a central aspect of that which is groovy. A groove is something you enter into ('getting into the groove') or establish, and, having entered it, '[a] groove is a comfortable place to be' (Keil 1966: 341). Although Keil does not note it as such, a groove is a fundamental ontological category similar to Heidegger's *mood*.

[88] Correspondingly, John Blacking writes that, similar to the paintings and sculptures of traditional African societies, the art of music is 'in the making rather than the finished piece. The labour of love [is] what matter[s] and what uplift[s] human beings...There is nothing left after a musical performance except the memory, and perhaps the retention of feelings' (1987: 24-25).

representations, in other words, are always already interpreted through the symbols concretising a way of life, and given shape in improvised performances (and other cultural works). Roger Savage suggests that 'the cultural self-understanding of a people is...a world in the making, the aesthetic imago of which can be represented as the artful play of time [i.e. music] (1994: 28).[89] In the following chapter, I elucidate and illustrate this claim in more detail and develop a theoretical model of improvisation, based on Ricoeur's threefold mimesis in narratives, which in turn can reflect the threefold relationship between being, formal configurations and cultural appropriation and transformation engendered by improvising music.

[89] Blacking, again, supports this claim in his assertion that the obligation to 'remake music at every performance' reflects the cultural necessity of music in our self-understandings (1987: 23). Blacking identifies that 'a culture is always being invented and re-invented by individual decision making'. While we can question the autonomy of this decision making process, the idea that a music's structure reflects this 'replication and repetition of ideas and sequences of action and the need to share sentiments and concepts, which are essential features of *culture*' (Berliner 1987: 23) is strikingly similar to the hermeneutic claim I am proposing here, and provides possible clues that link together musical structure and culture.

CHAPTER NINE

Developing a Narrative Model of Improvisation

Introduction

In this chapter I attempt to develop a model in which I link the structuring, configurative processes of improvisation, characterised in the previous chapter as *play*, with the symbolic character of improvisation and its sedimentation in cultural traditions. Having identified the dynamic operations involved in improvisatory performance, and having suggested that our being-in-the-world is disclosed through mood, our next step is to tie them together within an arc of operations that establishes improvisation in terms of its ability to engender cultural self-understandings and extend cultural horizons.

One of the principal directions I have been steering the present discussion of jazz improvisation is towards philosophical hermeneutics. I believe that this approach can help us to understand the dialectic between the productive imagination and cultural self-understandings, and forces us to consider what jazz improvisation can tell us about the fundamental role of music in creating worlds of possibility.

Having illustrated in the previous chapter that improvised music's non-referential, or self-referential, status need not encumber its ability to communicate, I draw on the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur to establish a connection between improvised music's mode of communication and its mimetic power in refiguring our experience of time. It is this mimetic power, moreover, that brings into view our ontological experience of mood. Thus, since mood is central to the foundation of selfhood, and since improvised music throws this aspect of the self into

full relief, selfhood and cultural identity can only be found *in front of* the improvised performance as it unfolds. Furthermore, since this performance is always dynamic, and since, on each subsequent performance, it becomes re-contextualised in new and different contexts, a performance always offers new readings of reality, and offers the expansion of an individual and a culture's horizons.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutic philosophy is based upon ontological reflections. The starting point for a consideration of aesthetic expression and experience, then, is the ways in which it affects our being-in-the-world. The previous two chapters outlined the fundamental link between aesthetic experience and being-in-the-world, making it necessary to re-establish a link between culture and selfhood. It is through creating and grasping the meanings of symbolic forms as they are presented in the course of performance, that humans configure their world in the midst of often perplexing flux and instability, and receive from performance a sense of selfhood. Thus, our worlds are our texts. Our being-in-the-world is constituted by the symbolic configurations found in stories, musical performances, rituals and artworks.

When Heidegger understood *Dasein* as a mode of being that exists through understanding being, ontological priority was given to our pre-understandings of the world. Mood, as *the* fundamental ontological category, exists, accordingly, as a raw experience – as an antecedent to any act of understanding or explanation. Ricoeur, on the other hand, by developing a concept of the text as an autonomous work, suggests that there can be no antecedents to our understanding of being, since all understanding is already understood in texts. We only understand ourselves through

the detour through the texts deposited in culture.[90] Thus, Ricoeur challenges both Heidegger and Gadamer by accusing them of taking an ontological shortcut to our understanding of being and overlooking the long route, via the objective texts and inscribed works of culture in which we find ourselves.

Ricoeur's text-based hermeneutics resembles my own concern with combining, in the study of jazz improvisation, analytical precision – the internal dynamics of form –with ontological testimony and the power this form has in shaping experience. Ricoeur defines the purpose of hermeneutics in terms of texts, and, while this may appear antithetical to the performance-contingent nature of improvisation, it provides the best method upon which to situate my study. For Ricoeur, the task of hermeneutics is:

> ...to seek in the text itself, on the one hand, the internal dynamic that governs the structuring of the work, and on the other hand, the power that the work possesses to project outside of itself and to give birth to a world that would truly be the 'thing' referred to by the text. This internal dynamic and external projection constitute what I call the work of the text. It is the task of hermeneutics to reconstruct this twofold work. (Ricoeur 1991b: 17-18)

Ricoeur's notion of an autonomous work, or text, is obviously reminiscent of the formalist pre-occupation with absolute music – the notion that music's meaning is intramusical and autonomous. So why, in light of the so-called 'New Musicological' critique of this anachronistic and conceited perspective, should I wish to return to a

[90] Ricoeur writes that with Heidegger, 'we are always engaged in going back to the foundations, but we are left incapable of beginning the movement of return that would lead from the fundamental ontology to the properly epistemological question of the status of the human sciences' (Ricoeur 1991b: 69).

notion of formal autonomy in my study of improvisation? In short, we can only know about our moods and feelings specifically, and our selfhood and culture more generally, when these have been brought to musical structure and articulated by performance. It is precisely the structural autonomy, diametrically opposed to our subjectivities as a formal pattern, which serves as the medium in which we can understand ourselves. Improvisation, I would venture to say, is the ability to take up within oneself the work of the structuring that is performed by the inscribed traditions of the jazz culture, and receive an enlarged sense of self. Improvising itself has the capacity to bridge, or mediate, analytical precision with ontological testimony. The ontology of moods is not antecedent to the epistemological categories of analysis; rather, they shape and form each other as their horizons merge.

Dialectic of explanation and understanding

In order to elaborate this claim more fully, it is necessary to explore what Ricoeur described as a dialectic of explanation and understanding. In this dialectic, Ricoeur incorporates both a structural or formal moment of explanation and an ontology of understanding (Ricoeur 1981). In other words, our explanations are always at work when we understand. This introduction of structural explanation into hermeneutics is useful for the present discussion of the relationship between formalism and improvisation. While formalism has been categorically eschewed by musicologists working on jazz, the dangers of slipping into subjectivism are all too apparent. By introducing a formal aspect to our understanding of jazz improvisation, far from reifying or reducing jazz to the internalist principles of form, this objectivity is crucial in communicating the message of the performance.

Thus, characterising improvised performances according to a 'work' is not a chauvinist fallacy. When Ricoeur refers to the text as a 'work' (1981: 136-140), he relates a twofold significance: the work as an object which can be explained, and the process of meaning that is at work in a text. Similarly, an improvised performance works to produce meaning and the structural codes are the medium of this meaning. Accordingly, a structural reading always presupposes an understanding of meaning. Understanding, from this perspective, is always appropriation. We try to understand what something means to *us*. As appropriation – making ours – all performing entails a self-understanding. In improvisation, then, we attempt to appropriate some form of meaningfulness from the configuration of music in its own space. As evidenced in the analyses of 'Giant Steps', there is a definite structuring procedure in improvised performances. I identified this procedure as a structuring process similar to the phenomenon of *play*. Building on this image, we could understand the structuring act of improvisation in terms of an actualisation or unlocking of a repository of meaning or a potential for understanding. The improvisation opens up a world which is initially distant from our world by virtue of its formal autonomy, but can be made one's own in a fusion of horizons.

Having suggested that my model for improvisation will follow a dialectic of explanation and understanding, the next crucial step is to consider what dimensions of meaning the performances open up. This mode of inquiry necessitates a focus on the ways in which the signs of the jazz language system come to life in performative discourse. Structural considerations represent only one point in the entire arc of operations that improvisation entails. In other words, in order to fully illustrate that improvisation is not reducible to any closed linguistic system, and to be able to

account for meaning in improvisatory discourse, it is necessary to introduce the dimension of time into our dynamic model of improvisation.

Time and improvisation

Improvisation is dependent on time: musical phrases must follow each other in time. Improvisation, as real-time composition, orders these phrases and establishes causal relationships between them. Therefore, can we not posit that there is, in fact, a productive relationship between improvisation and time; that improvised performances unfold a temporal world and it is in this temporal experience that the meaning of improvisation lies? When Ricoeur suggests that 'the common feature of human experience...is its temporal character. Everything that is recounted occurs in time, takes time, unfolds temporally; and what unfolds can be recounted' (1991b: 2), can we not argue that improvisation unfolds a feature of experience through its temporal mode of presentation, or that improvisation arises from the temporal character of human belongingness and then, by framing it according to a coherent structure, proceeds to give shape to and ultimately augments this character?

As a narrative activity, improvisation is a mode of discourse through which the mode of being, which we call temporality, is thrown into relief. While our experience of time is opaque and voiceless, improvising music is radiant, expressive and articulate.[91] However, in order to explain this claim more fully, we have to first investigate the nature of time itself.

[91] Ricoeur states that 'If time-experience is mute, narrating is eloquent' (1991a: 103).

Ricoeur outlines two philosophical theories of time: rationalist and phenomenological. A rationalist theory of time, espoused in particular by Aristotle and Kant, mirrors a scientific explanation: time is conceived as a series of 'now' points each of which passes as it is succeeded by a new point. We can understand this time through the analogy of a clock whose seconds and minutes pass and are each succeeded by a new point in time.[92] Similarly in music, it is taken for granted that musical performances occur in time, but we uncritically identify this time in terms of the linear representation of bar lines dividing the temporal flow into discrete successive units that become identifiable on a score.

Ricoeur contrasts this understanding of time with a phenomenological appreciation of time in terms of the aporias we are faced with when we confront our experience of time. Our understanding of time is aporetic, or incomplete, inasmuch as each time time passes in a series of succession, each time we try to identify a particular point in time, that point has already passed. In other words, the present is always already in the past. When I identify the time as 3:45 and 36 seconds, that time has already lapsed. Even the most accurate infinitesimal rendering of rational time will always lag behind the present time as experienced. This presents a paradox since 'now' can never exist in the present, and, as a consequence, the present can never exist. Similarly, the future cannot exist since it has not yet happened, and the past cannot exist since it is no longer present to us. To overcome this aporia in which we are at a loss or perplexed when confronted with the simultaneous yet opposing concepts of time, Augustine, in part XI of the *Confessions* written in the fourth century A.D., proposed a threefold present in which the past and the future gain

[92] For Kant, time, like space, is an *a priori* category whose existence is required to be present before we can reach any other understandings of the world. In other words, we intuitively understand the existence of time in terms of its linear organisation (Kant 1781 [1929]).

reality through the mental operations of memory and expectation. The mind thus stretches (extends) backwards and forwards in order to compensate for the lack of extension of the present. Thus, the present becomes a continuum which embraces both the past and the future (Augustine 1960 [397]).

According to Augustine, the time of God, by contrast, is eternal; our human experience is always ruptured and dispersed. Since, for Augustine, time is produced by the movement of the mind – an intentionality similar to the characteristic of mind Husserl espoused – his perspective is phenomenological in nature and illustrates that time is irreducibly human in character (Augustine 1960 [397]). It is from this observation that we can begin to interpret the temporality unfolded in music as the basis of its meaning.

The example of a melody is apposite for an understanding of phenomenological time irreducible to a mathematical, clock time. In a melody, we can only hear each note in the context of the previous and anticipated notes. In other words, the previous notes are still present to consciousness when we hear the current note. To hear notes in isolation would destroy the melodic character and the notes would remain meaningless instances of abstracted sound for the listener. Both musician and listener must continually retain in the memory the previous note while projecting into the future the next note through anticipation.[93] Since improvised performances do not rely on a written score, this intentionality is heightened. In order

[93] Husserl also characterised time according to a tri-partite structure made up of retention, the now point and protention (1969 [1905]). These dimensions are conditioned by the intentionality of our consciousness. In other words, the capacity to experience a melody, rather than just an instantaneous note, is intentional. Heidegger's phenomenology of time is rooted in the structure of *care*, the ontological integration of cognition, practicality and emotion. He, too, divides temporal experience into three levels (*extases*), but he emphasises the future: to come, having been, making present (1962 [1927]).

to make a meaningful solo, the improvised performer constantly anticipates and remembers as the present disappears.

As a dialectical complement to this phenomenological reading of time, Ricoeur finds a way in which to reintroduce Aristotle's understanding of time with the related concepts of *mimesis* (imitation) and *muthos* (emplotment, the organisation of events).[94] This enables us to understand the ways in which events are ordered in time according to causal connections, which in turn enables us to understand how, in improvisation, structural forms produce and augment experience.[95]

Ricoeur writes, 'Augustine groaned under the existential burden of discordance [the aporia of time]. Aristotle discerns in the poetic act...the triumph of concordance over discordance' (1984: 31). While our lived experience is discordant, it is through the structural experience of emplotment where concordance mends discordance. It is from this point that we can begin to identify the productive relationship between lived experience and discourse mediated by the threefold mimesis, and to discern the central thesis of this dissertation: the organisation of

[94] Significantly, Aristotle's definition of *mimesis*, as outlined in the *Poetics* (1996), contrasts with Plato who understood mimesis, or imitation, as a weakened copy of reality. By understanding *mimesis* as involving *muthos* – itself a dynamic activity – Aristotle understood, through his theory of tragedy, the productive capacity of imitation that refers to humans actively making a resemblance. Through mimesis we produce the imitation; there is a deliberate human intention to redescribe reality via *mimesis* and it figures that if *mimesis* is linked to *muthos* then our stories redescribe events and actions (this in turn is linked to Kant's productive imagination explained above). We can unify existence by retelling it; our world of action is linked to the imaginary, poetic realm. Mimesis thus provides the crucial link between music and culture.

[95] Ricoeur finds this complement necessary since he understood that phenomenology creates its own aporias since it fails to cover the whole problematic of time. By making time the distension of the soul (Augustine 1960 [397]) or a pure experience (Husserl 1969 [1905]), we interiorise the internal consciousness of time, and fail to address its objective manifestations. Narrative, Ricoeur attempts to illustrate, mediates between these two poles of non-congruence (1984).

events in an improvisation (*muthos*) is mimetic of our mood – it *makes* or composes mood: 'It does not see the universal, it makes it come forth' (Ricoeur 1984: 42).[96]

Threefold mimesis

Ricoeur develops Aristotle's theory of mimesis, in which tragic poetry is the imitation of action, into a threefold level of imitation ($mimesis_1$, $mimesis_2$ and $mimesis_3$). It is only the second level of mimesis which represents the structural level of emplotment, of the configuration of events into a story. This understanding of mimesis as a threefold dialectical process is particularly illuminating for a study of improvisation since, by encompassing three moments, it simultaneously links our ontological being-in-the-world with the immanent textual structures of the composing process with the productive reference – or signified – in the form of a refigured world. Thus, this mimetic *gestalt* can account for improvised music's aesthetic and cultural meaningfulness while simultaneously establishing the crucial connection between aesthetics and action, music and culture, improvising and selfhood.[97]

I shall briefly identify some of the main aspects of the three-stage dialectical process of mimesis as a basis for a dialectical understanding of improvisation. Narratives depend on the presence of actions to be represented – actions which are about something. $Mimesis_1$ is the level at which these actions are prefigured. In

[96] Thus, music does not simply express feelings; music is not the representation of inner states or emotions. The universals that music engenders are not Platonic universals. An improvised performance engenders universals when its structure rests on the immanent, internal connections rather than on external accidents: 'these internal connections as such are the beginning of the universalization' (Ricoeur 1984: 41). Ricoeur writes that 'each piece of music engenders its chain of tonalities, its movement of moods, of humours. In this sense, there would be a mimetic relation where the accent would be put on the production of a humour which did not exist in the experience of nature (1996: http://www.philagora.net/philo-fac/index.htm).

[97] Thus we can begin to develop an aesthetically-based practice theory of improvisation. Such a theory would not reproduce the limitations of Bourdieu's approach which failed to conceive of any ways in which actors could act outside of their socially determined *habitus* (cf. Bourdieu 1977).

other words, we have a partial and implicit or indirect understanding of their significance. This prefigured understanding is already pre-narratively organised structurally, symbolically and temporally. Our moods are organised structurally so as to distinguish from mere physical sensations. At the symbolic level, these moods always embody signs, rules and norms. As cultural beings, our moods are not private but public and readable to others. In other words, our feelings and moods are quasi-performances in which particular symbols provide the rules for interpreting them. Accordingly, by listening to a performance, we do not have to wait for a performer's explanation of what s/he performed; we can understand and experience it for ourselves. Finally, our pre-understanding has a temporal dimension, which will be discussed below.

The second level of mimesis ($mimesis_2$) configures these actions into a coherent story so as to 'augment their readability' (Ricoeur 1984: 141). This represents the first stage of imitation where actions, implicit in our experience of the world, are synthesised into a narrative context structured by narrative devices that are distant from the real world of acting and suffering, and which belong to the world of fiction which stands at a distance from our ordinary experiences of the world.[98]

The third stage of mimesis ($mimiesis_3$) completes the imitative process and signals a transformation of the actions implicit in $mimesis_1$ via the unreal, configurative processes of $mimesis_2$. It is through reading that we productively, rather than reproductively, imitate the world of action. Thus, the world of fiction has a transformative potential. The sequences of events and the time they configure,

[98] This stage of imitation represents the dialetic between explanation and understanding, and distanciation and appropriation, discussed in chapter 9 in reference to 'Giant Steps'.

which are unique to the world of narrative and cannot be experienced in the real world, renders our experience in a new light.

One of the most significant aspects of this mimetic level is the sense of an ending that emplotment engenders.[99] It is through the ability to direct an improvisation according to its cadential points in which musicians can recollect the themes of the improvisation and understand its sense as it is governed as a whole. Thus, improvisation provides musicians with radical reconceptualisations of their ordinary understandings of time as the succession of instants, and inverts the phenomenological experience of time, prefigured in $mimesis_1$, since operations are recollected in memory and become reversible.[100] Thus, this level is the level on which an outer world of experience is drawn into the inner world of the musical performance as it structures our experiences and configures temporality at a human, narrative level.

Finally, the third level of mimesis ($mimesis_3$) is the refiguration of the configured, structural, synthetic design of improvised performances. This level refers back to the pre-understandings of the practical experiences of $mimesis_1$ and considers the ways in which musicians' experiences have been enlarged through the process of performing.

In brief, we can state that $mimesis_1$ provides the source of poetic composition, $mimesis_2$ is the creative composition itself and $mimesis_3$ is the completion of the act

[99] Ricoeur draws on the title of Frank Kermode's book, *The Sense of an Ending* (1966), to illuminate this insight.

[100] As Schuller highlighted in his formalist analysis of Rollins' 'Blue Seven', the formal, sequential and thematic structuring can enable us to hear the beginning in the ending and the ending in the beginning, thus providing a mirror image of our experience of time.

in the listener. This dialectical model will help to answer the question that lies at the heart of this dissertation: how does an improvisation configure itself in its own space and how does this configuration refigure the world of experience? An anticipation of the answer reveals that the structural devices of emplotment, or the compositional aspects of improvisation identified by formalist methods, mediate between a lived experience which remains mute and inchoate, and a performative experience in which these experiences are rendered meaningful. The most important aspect of this threefold design for a poetic and cultural understanding of improvisation is this: as a dialectic, we should think neither of a meaningful event as pre-existent to the structuring compositional devices – independent of our performances – nor the plot as pre-existent to the meaningful events – independent from our experiences. Each is formed through the other. In other words, both the composition and the experiences are constantly emerging as the performance unfolds, evincing the aesthetic phenomenon of *play*.

Bridging the two sides of the musical fabric

Before I progress to examine further the relationship between this dialectic and improvisation, I wish to emphasise that this process obfuscates the distinctions between Cook's 'two sides of the musical fabric', in which an internal musical world is juxtaposed to an external world of representation (Cook 1990: 122-160). The world of improvisation, which is constructed according to synthetic compositional devices in order to confer intelligibility, is dialectically linked to the experiences a musical performance unfolds. In other words, the external world of representation and structure entails the internal world of experience, mood and feeling, and *vice*

versa. Structures, as the organisation of events, compose experience, moods and feelings; structures establish what is necessary in composition [sic].[101]

When attempting to account for the formal compositional elements that configure 'Giant Steps', and especially when attempting to account for the similarities that the compositional elements share both within the solos and across the different solos, it becomes clear that musicians mediate according to a perspective – the structures we use compose and recompose our experience. This schematism is constituted within a tradition which can always be reactivated by poetic expression. Thus, improvising musicians reactivate the moods and experiences that sprung forth in the original performance. This process in turn becomes central to the improviser's cultural efforts to exist meaningfully. Thus, the formal properties discernable in 'Giant Steps' are works of the productive imagination which have engendered a type or paradigm which in turn engenders a cultural understanding.

In terms of our model of improvisation, I would venture to say that the first stage of mimesis ($mimesis_1$) refers to the meaningful, temporal structures of the world and its symbolic nature; in other words, the ways in which we find ourselves in the world – our mood. Recalling Heidegger's observation that understanding always has a mood and mood always has its understanding (1962 [1927]) – a radical departure

[101] Ricoeur writes that feeling is a second-order intentional structure: 'To *feel*, in the emotional sense of the word, is to make ours what has been put at a distance by thought in its objectifying phase. Feelings, therefore, have a very complex kind of intentionality. They are not merely inner states but interiorized thoughts...They make the schematized thought ours. [The function of feeling] is to abolish the distance between knower and known without cancelling the cognitive structure of thought and the intentional distance which it implies' (1980: 154). Similarly, he suggests that 'each poem...structures a mood which is this unique mood generated by this unique string of words. In that sense, it is coextensive to the verbal structure itself' (Ricoeur 1980: 154). The idea that the mood is the iconic as felt, provides the basis for the deconstruction of an opposition between systematic representation, structure and musical experience, created by both Cook and Charles Seeger, most notably in the latter's linguocentric predicament (1977).

from the traditional idea of mood in terms of sensuous states or as accompaniments to feeling – we can begin to understand 'groove' in terms of a mood: as a mode of disclosure, or a mode of disclosing our being-in-the-world. 'Groove', as we have established, is the essential pre-condition for improvisation and, like mood, is always temporal in nature.[102] Our moods and feelings are always oriented towards the future; through feeling, we find ourselves already in the world. Our moods attune us to the world and pre-figure a relationship to the world based on perception or knowledge. The level of $mimesis_1$ refers to this pre-narrative capacity.

This world of mood, found in our experience only in an implicit, opaque, and partial form, is subject to emplotment ($mimesis_2$). Our mute experiences of being-in-the-world demand to be articulated in an eloquent narrative form: the structural, synthetic and compositional forms that shape improvisation. Similarly, this mood has a temporal dimension and is reflective of our being confronted by the aporias of time which demand to be narrated. In other words, our moods and feelings already have a temporal dimension, and have the potential to be articulated through the narrative structures of improvisation.[103]

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[102] This can be further elaborated by Ricoeur's observation that moods are relations outside of the self, 'a manner of inhabiting a world here and now; it is this mood that can be painted, put into music or into narrative...which if it is successful, will have the right kind of rapport with it' (Ricoeur 1998: 179).

[103] Ricoeur suggests that music's mimetic function does not originate in the world of action, but in mood. He writes that it is 'music which takes charge of the sonorous effectuation of the *mood* that each piece possesses: a certain humour, and it is as such that each installs in us the humour or the corresponding tonality. Music opens up in us a region where unspoken sentiments can be represented and our being-affected can be expressed...[M]usic creates in us feelings which have no name; it expands our emotional space, it opens up in us a region where there can occur feelings that are absolutely unspoken. When we listen to such music, we enter into a region of the soul which cannot be explored otherwise than by the hearing of this piece. Each work is authentically a modality of the soul, a modulation of the soul (1996: http://www.philagora.net/philo-fac/index.htm, emphasis added; see also 1998: 174).

It is through narratives, or compositional devices established in improvisation, that we bring concord and unity to the discordant and dispersed aporia of time, prefigured in $mimesis_1$ by means of the invention of a plot ($mimesis_2$). As the discordance of time is mediated by the concordance of the tale (Ricoeur 1991a: 465-466), a dynamic laboratory of time unfolds. The plot is of particular interest to the present study since it involves the organisation of events. We can loosely borrow the term plot, or emplotment, not to refer to a static structure but to an integrative process, a dynamic structuring process, that is surely at the heart of improvisation. A plot synthesises heterogeneous elements, transforming the manifold events into a story, and contributing to its beginning and end. This structuring process is not merely the enumeration of successive events; it is the organisation of an intelligible whole.[104] Similarly, in improvised performances, the structuring process is not merely organising and reorganising phrases in a disconnected, linear fashion according to the succession of chords in a sequence; it is the ordering of these events into dynamic instances of cause and effect, tension and release, that constitutes an intelligible and meaningful whole.[105]

At a deeper level, the plot synthesises two experiences of time: on the one hand it follows a succession of chords, and on the other it integrates this succession through a story, by virtue of which a performance gains its melody and its followability. Ricoeur tells us that 'to compose a story is, from the temporal point of view, to derive a configuration from a succession' (1991a: 427). This is the point at

[104] Ricoeur explains that '[T]he plot is the intelligible unit that holds together circumstances, ends and means, initiatives and unwanted consequences...the act of "taking together" – of com-posing – those ingredients of human action which, in ordinary experience, remain dissimilar and discordant' (Ricoeur 1991b: 4).

[105] This configurative process was overlooked by Berliner who concluded his *magnum opus* (1994) with the idea that jazz improvisation is essentially a mysterious process because it is difficult to systematise the large stock of musical materials, basic skills and practices it draws upon.

which an improviser no longer has to concentrate on each chord – when one is first confronted with a chord sequence such as found in 'Giant Steps', each chord seems unrelated to its neighbours and appears to be an obstacle to freedom or improvisation[106] – and instead focuses on playing a melody and creating new contours and shapes which endure beyond the fleeting chords. This is also when the improviser feels 'freed up' and surprises him- or herself with melodic or rhythmic inventiveness. Improvisation, thus, has a necessary temporal identity which, like stories, endures and remains right across that which passes away (cf. Ricoeur 1991a: 427).

In narrative, one of the most significant features of mimesis$_2$ is its capacity to represent our complex and tensive experiences of time. Similarly, we can explore the ways in which improvised performances engender different depictions of time.[107] While a linear, sequential time of chords enables both the manifestation of a successive movement from beginning to end, and the organisation of musical gestures and events, a linear abstraction cannot account for the propulsive drive that manifests itself during improvised performances. It is through this manifestation of time that the idea of 'groove' expresses itself in terms of an existential intentionality. Once this 'groove' is established, our phenomenology of time is organised according to a higher level of radicality.[108] It is rumoured that Elvin Jones, in response to the

[106] It is interesting to listen to how the pianist in Coltrane's recording of 'Giant Steps', Tommy Flanagan, struggles in making sense of the radical departure in conventional jazz harmony.

[107] Alfred Schutz describes this temporal complex configured in musical performances as the 'pluridimensionality of time' (1964) and Blacking understands that music engenders a 'special world of virtual time [which] has the power to awaken "the other mind", to transport us away from the world of culturally regulated, actual time' (1968: 314). However, both Schutz and Blacking fail to understand that music mediates between these two dimensions of time; rather, they favour a phenomenological reading of time over the synthetic emplotment characteristic of cosmological, or what Blacking referred to as cultural, time.

[108] Heidegger establishes three levels of radicality in the organisation of time (1962 [1927]). These levels help him distinguish between authenticity and inauthenticity in our relation to time. Decreasing

question 'how do you [the John Coltrane Quartet of the 1960s] maintain that level of intensity?', responded, 'you've got to be prepared to die with them!' (Branford Marsalis as cited in Ward 2000: 435). This unification, by resoluteness in the face of death, is a thoroughly Heideggerean concept (*angst*). It sheds light on the relationship between temporality and improvisation and illustrates, through anticipatory resoluteness, the ways in which the improvisatory *Dasein* has come to terms with its finitude, freedom and individuality.[109]

However, this particular temporal experience presupposes what in reality is a proliferation of different temporal experiences that are negotiated through improvising. This existential resoluteness, thus, has to be mediated by the structure of narrative which endows improvisation with a structure that no chronological model can engender.[110] This temporal diversity at the level of configuration is easily identifiable when studying any improvised solo. For instance, melodies repeat fragments of well known songs; excerpts are repeated and inverted; ideas pre-empt the succeeding bar; players often insert a tritone substitution or a ii-V-I chord within harmonies, often densely packing long, complex phrases within a relatively short period of time, while on other occasions they may state a single idea over four or more chords; and a player may play 'out of key' and disregard the linear harmonic

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in authenticity, these levels are: *temporality,* which emphasises the time of the future and our being-towards-death: this is the most authentic time experience; *historicity*, which emphasises our becoming, our stretching-along life and our ability to repeat and retrieve our inherited possibilities; and *within-timeness*, the time in which events occur. This is the least authentic quality of time and it more closely resembles linear representations of calculations and measurements. The level of radicality I allude to here corresponds with Schutz's 'inner time' (1964: 173) and Blacking's 'virtual time' (1968: 314).

[109] This resoluteness towards death is not considered negative by Heidegger; *Dasein* only reaches a sense of completion in death when it loses its throwness. Hence, we are anxious. This ontological mood of anxiety is not to be misunderstood as fear; it is the very disclosure of our authentic being-in-the-world. Improvisation's authentic temporality, therefore, reveals and gives expression to this mood. Improvisation is the disclosure of the temporal meaning of the being of *Dasein* (see Ferrara 1991: 111).

[110] This narrative structure in turn helps resolve and poetically suspend the aporias of time and provides a key to improvisation's meaning.

structure, or they may delay their resolution until the last possible minute, stretching the orientation of time while its structure remains untouched. Improvisers draw on common vocabularies shared in a tradition, while opening spaces towards the future and defying expectations, forcing the band and the audience to shift their temporal perception.[111] The structuring structures of improvisation's emplotment, thus, bring a concordance to the discordant experiences of time, while these experiences of time are mimetically produced through emplotment. The relationship is complementary and productive.

Understanding the importance of this narrative temporality, in which multiple levels of time are explored and brought into tension with each other, is essential in learning to improvise. Many novice improvisers confront the most obstinate obstacle to their development when they neglect to consider the multiple temporal qualities involved in the improvisatory process. Berliner noted that 'disoriented novices commonly fail to anticipate the chord changes, instead clashing with the underlying harmony. In other instances they manage to complement successive chords but lose sight of the larger form'(Berliner 1994: 178). Emily Remler acknowledged that

[111] The idea that music expresses manifold qualities of our complex, temporal experience is also suggested by Jonathan Kramer who identifies linearity as 'the determination of some characteristics of music in accordance with implications that arise from earlier events in the piece', while nonlinearity 'is the determination of some characteristics of music in accordance with implications that arise governing an entire piece or section' (J. Kramer 1990: 20). Furthermore, he observes that 'linearity and nonlinearity are the two fundamental means by which music structures time and by which time structures music. Nonlinearity is not merely the absence of linearity but is itself a structural force. Since these two forces may appear, to different degrees and in different combinations, on each level of music's hierarchic structure, their interplay determines both the style and the form of a composition' (J. Kramer 1990: 20). This approximates Ricoeur's understanding of emplotment's mixed intelligibility and complex reckoning with time.

The relationship between nonlinear and linear time in improvisation is also recognised by Sarath who understands that while the two dimensions remain separate, successful improvisation and the origin of novel behaviour are determined by the extent to which the two levels are negotiated (Sarath 1994). However, at its limit, he argues that 'temporal awareness in improvisation is implosive, forever discarding the linear relationships between past and future coordinates for the stability and self-sufficiency of the moment' (Sarath 1994: 127).

understanding the bigger picture, or the narrative dimension of an improvised form, would present her with more creative opportunities. She advocated thinking 'in terms of whole choruses instead of two-bar and four-bar phrases' and '...build[ing] the tension over a whole chorus' rather than just taking each chord or bar at a time (Remler as cited in Berliner 1994: 266). Similarly, bass player Rufus Reid acknowledged the need for a temporal dynamic in his bass lines which then serve as a basis for the improviser:

> When I'm playing walking bass lines, I try to have the line moving somewhere. ...This has a lot to do with harmonic phrasing. If I'm playing a ii–V–I progression, I'm not just playing the notes of the chord. I'm moving toward V when I'm playing ii. I'm constantly flowing, pushing toward I. If you think consciously of moving somewhere harmonically when you play, it assimilates this swinging sound, because harmonic sound is motion.[112] (Reid as cited in Berliner 1994: 352)

Nick Keller offered the following observation with regards to the mixed intelligibility of an improvised jazz solo and its capability of engendering outstanding temporal diversity:

[112] While bass players usually adopt an objective time keeping role, they, too, recognise the interplay of multiple levels of temporality which jazz schematises and formulates. Of course, the structuring of new modes of time experience becomes especially apparent when the extra dimension of the rhythm section is considered (piano/guitar, bass, drums). This entails a mutual reckoning of time and a mutual exploration of time's complexities that occur in the dialogue between the soloist and the rhythm section and among the members of the rhythm section. While the bassist may offer a firm sense of linearity, the pianist and drummer are stretching this time in different directions according to their intentionalities and responses to the soloist or each other. The soloist in turn decides to acquiesce or resist these temporal horizons. A soloist or rhythm section will often establish a tempo change, or will introduce a pedal point which creates the feeling of a temporal suspension. In short, all of these temporal experiences belong to the performance itself and the performance alone. Configuration is the inner world of the musical improvisation as it shapes our experiences.

> Often my solos will start off sticking pretty close to the melody and then I'll develop it from there...I guess that's a pretty common thing that people do, it's not really conscious, I mean, you don't think about it, it's just, like, what feels natural to do. So, you start off sticking with the melody, maybe having quite of bit of space and just sort of getting into the groove and leaving space for the drums or piano to get in some ideas. Then I'll start making things a bit denser, I'll play some lines and start getting away from the melody and playing against the bass line, you know, getting that groove going with some...more oblique-sounding phases that create tension, and keep that time going forward and grooving...there's definitely a structure; there are devices that you know about, from listening to records and seeing guys perform. That's where the phrases you learn come into it. They, like, give you that sense of a home base, you know. I may be floating around with all this exploratory, chromatic stuff, or polyrhythms, getting out there, and then come back with a nice bebop phrase or a double time passage that just locks me back into the time. Yeah, and that's what other people dig too, you know, when they're listening or playing with you...the ways in which I might get out there and stretch the time and then come back home with something familiar and in the pocket. (27-02-03)

Similarly, Chris Baker observed the ways in which improvising embraces different aspects of our temporal experience:

> That's why it's so important to get out there and play and not just learn all the technique because, it's like, once I'm out there playing with other cats, its not just like going from one chord to another, plodding on. It's much more than that. There are all these other things that make a good solo: I've got this long-range vision which tells me where I'm going and, like, you know Lester Young said, you know, 'tell a story'. There's no point in just stringing together these phrases just cos they

fit with the harmony, so I'm always thinking about making musical statements. (10-11-02)

As a means of composition, emplotment overcomes our existential burden of discordance and structures our experience (Ricoeur 1984). Emplotment appears to me to be the most satisfactory analogy for the configurative dimension of improvisation since it refers to a number of complex levels: first, plots order events into intelligible wholes; similarly, improvised performances order individual phrases selected from a potentially infinite field of musical events, into meaningful wholes. To imagine a series of events with a meaningful relationship, to relate aspects of the world with which we are familiar to a projection of something novel, is to tell a story.[113]

Second, emplotment is linked to the productive imagination[114] and engenders a 'mixed intelligibility' (Ricoeur 1984: 68) between a style, melodic ideas or an identity of a performance, and the intuitive presentation of episodes and harmonic structure. Similarly, in improvisation, the narrative imagination introduces repetition into a linear sequence of events – a musical idea can be repeated in different

[113] For Stephen Nachmanovitch, improvisation is a point of convergence between the retreat into what is known and the world that lies before us, potentially out of reach. It is the place where 'planning and spontaneity become one. Reason and intuition become two faces of truth' (Nachmanovitch 1990:104).

[114] This notion of synthesis, of course, is based on the Kantian act of judgement, which becomes the basis for all transcendental logic – a logic which combines our intuitions about space and time with our concepts of understanding, and grasps the many under the same. John Rink implicitly follows this Kantian synthesis when he explores the dynamic between intuitive and conscious thought in the analysis of musical performances (2002: 35-58). Furthermore, he understands that performances engender a process of analysis which is akin to the process of emplotment I am outlining here. By juxtaposing a 'performer's analysis' with a 'rigorous analysis', he highlights the importance of shape over structure, and temporality over stasis in the former conceptualisation of music. With regards to temporality, he suggests that this is a 'factor either ignored or downplayed in at least some "rigorous analysis", to invidious effect when the results thereof are directly harnessed to performance'. His Kantian-style synthesis is termed 'informed intuition', which he states 'recognises the importance of intuition in the interpretive process but also that considerable knowledge and experience generally lie behind it – in other words, that intuition need not come out of the blue, and need not be merely capricious' (Rink 2002: 36).

harmonic stages of the sequence – which enables the recapitulation of an idea and the ability to read time backwards.[115] Thus, we can maintain the resounding identity of the theme engendered by the performance while still maintaining the temporality of its content. The structural features of emplotment, highlighted and repeated in the analysis and transcription of 'Giant Steps', forge a causal continuity from a temporal succession, and consequently creates the intelligibility and credibility of the narrative-improvisation.

Indeed, this configurative process can shed light on the seemingly 'magical' creative process of improvisation: narrative is a construct we impose on our experiences as we confront them and describe them. Thus, improvisation celebrates reality in the making. By understanding improvisation only in terms of its episodic character – the arrangement of phrases according to the succession of chords – we neglect its configurational character. This in turn establishes a distance between the narrative itself as an isolated, autonomous form, and the lived experience it shapes and breaths new life into. Furthermore, it is this synthetic, productive imagination which becomes sedimented into traditions. As is illustrated in the transcriptions of 'Giant Steps', there is a sedimented model that guides the productive imagination which, far from leading to the mere reiteration of Coltrane's original solo, engenders innovations.

These observations relate to the second, and perhaps more important point for ethnomusicology: emplotment mediates between a pre-understanding of our being-

[115] Drawing on Kermode's notion of 'the sense of an ending' (1966), Ricoeur argues that it is from an end point of a story that its meaning can be grasped: 'In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending, we also learn to read time itself backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal conditions' (Ricoeur 1984: 67).

in-the-world and its temporal features, and a post-understanding which, in the final analysis, enables us to consider improvisation's connection between the world of music and the world of cultural experience. If we understand that improvisation arises from the temporal character of human belongingness, we must concede that improvisation has a real reference, however indirect this reference is. The function of emplotment, therefore, is a symbolic tool for indirect representation which, in itself is a lineament of the productive imagination's aptitude to shape our lives. Ricoeur writes that 'in one way or another, all symbol systems contribute to shaping reality. More particularly, the plots that we invent help us to shape our confused, formless, and in the last resort mute temporal experience' (Ricoeur 1991b: 6). Similarly, he argues that:

> ...the models of actions elaborated by narrative fiction are models for redescribing the practical field in accordance with the narrative typology resulting from the work of the productive imagination. Because it is a world, the world of the text necessarily collides with the real world in order to 'remake' it, either by confirming it or by denying it. (Ricoeur 1991b: 6)

Can we not argue the same for improvisation?[116] Improvisation is one of the ways in which humans attempt to understand and negotiate their rich, complex and

[116] Jean-Jacques Nattiez asks in the title of an article, 'Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?' (1990). He reminds us that 'the question of musical narrative, while by no means new, is making a comeback as the order of the day in the field of musicological thought' (Nattiez 1990: 240). There are many different approaches with which to pursue this direction (Abbate 1991; Maus 1991), but musicologist Vera Micznik draws specific attention to Ricoeur's notion that the narrative function of music is inextricably linked with temporality. Quoting Ricoeur, she surmises that 'in so far as discourse "elicits a configuration from a succession" or "makes the succession of events into significant wholes" unfolding between beginnings and endings, thus involving the concept of recollection, narrative discourse (or "the time of fable-and-theme" as Ricoeur calls it) is more deeply temporal than the mere chronological succession of events (or "episodic narrative")' (Micznik 2001: 195). Anthony Newcomb also considers whether non-text-based music can also narrate. Also drawing on Ricoeur, he argues that following a work of music entails the same basic activity as following a story, namely the interpretation of a succession of events as a meaningful configuration (Newcomb 1992).

often contradictory world of experience. The ways in which musical gestures condense, abbreviate and heighten our experiences in a language and symbol system of their own through the suspension of ordinary reference, enables the return back into the real world of human experience all the more poignant and filled with meaning. Improvisations, thus, do not simply represent the world of feelings and moods. They do not simply express our feelings; rather, they actively work these feelings and project new and unique ones.

The forms, structures and paradigms in improvisation, thus, have a twofold structure which shares in common Ricoeur's description of the sign: retreat from and transfer back into the world (Ricoeur 1998: 175). As I shall illustrate in the final chapter on appropriation, it is this dialectic between improvisation's retreat from the world of experience and context – its independent afterlife embodied in canons and works such as 'Giant Steps' – and its transfer back into the world of experience through different cultural and performance contexts – such as the subsequent performances of 'Giant Steps' or any reworking of a jazz standard – that enables its affective and aesthetic power in reshaping our horizons.

To understand improvisation solely in terms of its internal constitution as an unreal order – 'music for music's sake' – neglects to grasp the ways in which improvisation affects reality and preserves it, encased in an aesthetic realm reserved for mere contemplation. Thus, the autonomy 'Giant Steps' evinces by virtue of its canonic status bears witness to the distance from reality it has achieved. As its representational function diminishes, and as it retreats further into the world of the musical form, the more intense the return will be on our experience as we appropriate

it and perform it in different contexts 'as if our experience were visited from infinitely further away than itself' (Ricoeur 1998: 176).[117] My informants enjoyed the challenges of 'Giant Steps' since the rewards were high; they opened up vast new avenues for creative exploration and configured new ways of playing jazz.

Tradition: the dialectic of sedimentation and innovation

Another characteristic of the transcendental (as opposed to the psychologising) capacity of the productive imagination in the configurational level of $mimesis_2$, is the way in which it is constituted in a tradition. I illustrated above the ways in which a comparative study of solos over 'Giant Steps' reveals a typology or paradigm of the productive imagination. This section explores the claim that traditions are constituted by the interplay of innovation and sedimentation engendered in improvising.

Ricoeur tells us that the labour of imagination is not born from nothing; 'it is bound in one way or another to the tradition's paradigms. But the range of solutions is vast. It is deployed between the two poles of servile application and calculated deviation' (Ricoeur 1984: 70). In other words, returning to our 'Giant Steps' example, the solutions to the problems that present themselves in performance are bound to a tradition. This insight provides an alternative to the view that a tradition is a discursive canon which exerts power over its performers.

Traditions are characterised by two poles: sedimentation and innovation. Inasmuch as the improvisatory imagination recalls particular patterns, repeats stylistic

[117] Ricoeur writes: 'If art did not have, despite its retreat [into itself], the capacity to come bursting into our midst, into our world, it would be completely innocuous; it would be struck with insignificance and reduced to sheer entertainment, it would be confined to a parenthesis in our concerns' (1998: 175).

ideas and reiterates musical statements and forms, it is evidently ordering itself, or sedimenting, into a paradigm. This paradigm in turn furnishes the rules for subsequent experimentation. However, the imagination's dual role (as reproductive and productive) also enables the projection of new horizons. Each new performance is an individual work which bases itself on the grammar of a paradigm. From this paradigm, improvisers make something singular from the universal. Ricoeur writes: '...the possibility of deviation is inscribed in the relation between sedimented paradigms and actual works' (1984: 70). Deviations confer a history on the productive imagination – there are discernable deviations in formal paradigms from the swing era to the bebop era, from modal jazz to free jazz – which in turn confers another dimension of time to the configurative level of mimesis$_2$.

A hermeneutic understanding of tradition does not view it as static; rather, it recognises the ways in which we always live in traditions; the preservation of traditions distinguishes a way of life and offers a wealth of new possibilities. For Gadamer, a tradition is by no means a static entity or permanent precondition. Instead, tradition implies a handing down; it entails an ongoing process of improvisation, adjustment and readjustment and cultivation. Gadamer writes that tradition engenders the notion of freedom itself:

> The fact is that in tradition there is always an element of freedom and of history itself. Even the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated. (Gadamer 1994 [1960]: 281)

The fact that we are always situated in a tradition is celebrated by the jazz musicians with whom I spoke. When musical ideas and gestures manifest themselves into protocols and forms such as those in 'Giant Steps', they become symbolic documents of the jazz community. They represent what Ricoeur described as an 'enlargement of our collective memory' (1988: 118). Thus, these paradigms or forms simultaneously exist in the past, present and future of the jazz community. They represent a medium which helps to frame possibilities into the present through a concrete and tangible model. These paradigms become physical lineaments embodied in recordings and transcriptions, which represent the community's learning as it endures and unfolds through the community's history. These forms and paradigms, therefore, are not merely a thing to play with, or points of departure, as Nettl (1998), Berliner (1994) and others have observed; rather, they represent an opening to the transformative power of *play*.[118]

Mark Small suggested that '...wherever I go around the world, whatever different clubs I find myself in, there's this continuity of ideas which is jazz. This doesn't mean to say that everyone sounds the same, but it shows that we speak the same language and can take it from there' (email correspondence 01-02-04). Frank

[118] A jazz performance is similar in many regards to the festival as described by Gadamer (1994 [1960]: 122-124) wherein a community comprehends each occurrence as the same, yet marked as a distinct entity in time which is concerned with the present; it is not simply a repetition of an event in the past. It is in this clash, this fusion of horizons between past and present, that the space for *play* emerges; we are taken up by the presence of the festival and transformed into a festive mood. Chernoff alludes to the 'festive' character of improvised music and the uniqueness of each performance in the context of tradition. He suggests that 'the musical form is open rather than rigid, set up so it affords a focus for the expression of individuality that subtly distinguishes an occasion within the context of tradition' (Chernoff 1979: 126). Anthropologist Victor Turner coins the term 'normative *communitas*' to describe similar festive occasions in which 'individuals come together and devise rules for themselves' (1986: 44). The 'normative *communitas*' could possibly provide another analogy for improvisation since it also illustrates a mediation, or fusion of horizons, between individual expression and social integration, and spontaneous creation and an indebtedness to tradition.

Kozyra also told me in an email following our conversations at *Jax* in October 2002, that:

> I do think the jazz community wants to hear an influence of the tradition...but, at the same time, they want to hear new and original ideas. When I listen to someone play I like to hear their influence but I like to hear their own personal take on it. It's important to have come from somewhere so that you can make your own route, and find your own voice. Everybody has to pay dues to the tradition: cats like Coltrane pass down important ways of playing and then its up to the individual to interpret what he said and make it their own. We are always indebted to innovators like Bird, Wayne Shorter and Coltrane but remember that they too were in the tradition and they had to learn. Bird spent a whole year out learning Lester Young solos before he came out with this new bebop thing. It's all passed along from each generation. There are phrases that I play today that still sound fresh but they were first played in the 50s...There isn't a big gaping hole between what someone like Hank Mobley was playing in the 50s and what I play now. That doesn't mean to say that I've not moved on, that I'm just retrospective. It's important in jazz to show where you've come from and see yourself today as a present part of what went on before. (email correspondence 25-10-02)

Similarly, Paul Ricoeur suggests that:

> Before being an inert deposit, tradition is an operation that can only make sense dialectically through the exchange between the interpreted past and the interpreting present...The notion of tradition, taken in the sense of traditions, signifies that we are never in a position of being absolute innovators but rather are always first of all in the situation of being heirs. (Ricoeur 1988: 221)

The improvisatory imagination schematises sedimentation and innovation so that they appear as complementary rather than opposite. Rather than inert transmissions of dead deposits – which is how the so-called 'New Musicological' critique of formalist-inspired improvisation treatises has understood tradition – these transmissions can always be reactivated by creative moments of improvisatory activity. As Kearney points out, 'tradition can only survive, can only pass itself on from one generation to the next, by fostering innovation in its midst' (1998: 163).

These insights both support and help us to move beyond Alfred Lord's influential proposition that '[t]he singer of tales is at once the tradition and an individual creator' (1960: 45). As a commonly cited basis for studies of improvisation (see chapter 2), Lord's depiction of an oral poet's formulaic devices offers an understanding of the relationship between tradition and innovation but fails to take into account the ways in which traditions act as symbolic repositories which are reshaped and reawakened according to each performance. Lord writes that:

> The singer of tales is at once the tradition and an individual creator. His manner of composition differs from that used by a writer in that the oral poet makes no conscious effort to break the traditional phrases and incidents; he is forced by the rapidity of composition in performance to use these traditional elements. To him they are not merely necessary, however; they are also right. He seeks no others, and yet he practices great freedom in his use of them because they are themselves flexible. (Lord 1960: 45)

However, the improviser is not forced to use formulaic devices due to the rapidity of the composition (see also Pressing 1998), but as a debt to the symbolic

vehemence they attest to, which in turn provides the jazz community with a unity of collective imagination. Furthermore, these symbols are flexible since each performative event represents a fusion of horizons, or a unique musical statement which unfolds a singular, yet communicable musical world whose new horizons recede as they unfold.

While improvisatory traditions enable the emergence of a grammar – such as a bebop grammar which directs the improvisations over common chord sequences – this does not eliminate the role of the productive, poetic imagination in making each performance new and different. Nick Keller spoke at length of this complementary, reciprocal relationship while we were delving into his CD collection at his apartment in West Los Angeles in October 2003:

> You can't just think you can play differently all the time. People won't really connect to it; they've got to have, like, a marker which they can hold on to. But also you want to *sound* like you're playing jazz. I mean, you can make up a whole bunch of new and different licks but they won't sound like jazz and there's no reference point...There are, like, fundamentals that have been passed down ever since...I guess the blues and the spirituals, and they've developed and reached this really rich language. Tradition's good 'cause it lets you communicate with each other and with other people listening. Also, there's this weird way in that you can kinda connect with the tradition. Like, when I'm playing a modal thing like 'Impressions' I'll definitely tune into 'Trane and try to get into his way of thinking from what I've learned when I listen to him. It's good to play along with records when you learn a tune 'cause you get a feel of what's gone on before what kind of feeling they were trying to get, and then you can get an idea of that feeling and then make that your own. (17-10-03)

Transcribing solos

One of the ways in which learners understand this relationship between sedimentation and innovation is through transcribing solos of famous recordings. Transcribing solos is one of the best ways to understand the jazz tradition and is an interpretive process which can be understood hermeneutically. Trumpet player Erik Jekabson related his experiences of transcribing to me through an email:

> I've found that transcribing and analysing music is a necessary way to really learn [the tradition]. I transcribed a lot of solos to learn jazz vocabulary...to understand what players were doing. Really, most of the solos I learned early on were horn solos, but since then, I've found that the best way to really know any piece of music is to transcribe it. The first solo I learned and transcribed was Lee Morgan's 'The Sidewinder' which is a great solo. It was such an accomplishment to put it down on paper, and then to be able to play it was even better. When I transcribe a jazz solo, I really get to know every nuance of the musicians' playing. It's only once I've done that a few times that I can start thinking in the right way and I just begin to play better solos. (email correspondence 05-11-02)

Mark Small offered this recollection of transcribing:

> In college I began to transcribe seriously and the main person I transcribed was Joe Henderson. He was the first player that I liked every aspect of. I think I chose his style because he stuck with ideas, you know, and they became like these little characters that you got to see reappear in his story. I also loved his smooth sound and rhythmic approach. It was like, he played less lines and more ideas. He's quite challenging in that way, I mean you have to think...And that's

> helped my own playing...it's helped me come up with new ideas. (email correspondence 01-02-04)

I also asked Nick Keller whether he transcribes and how it benefited his playing:

> The best thing about transcribing is getting the feeling of how somebody great approaches a solo. I don't really listen to individual phrases, although if there's something I really like I try and get it down in my fingers. But that comes later. I listen to it about 15 times so I can, like, sing along. It's important to *know* the solo. Then I try and get it down on my guitar. Some people write it down but I personally don't feel that's necessary. I guess if you're composing or if you want to do a specific analysis or maybe if you teach that's a good idea, but for me, I just want to absorb the things I hear and then move on from that. It's just about getting a feeling for what jazz is about. Even when I go to a gig, like last night [after a Lee Konitz concert we both attended with John Ritchie], as soon as I got home I tried to get all the sounds that were still ringing in my head out on my guitar. That way I know that it's all there and I have, like, a confidence whenever I play. (17-10-03)

As musicians learn standards from others' interpretations, they develop a way of directing themselves within the chord sequence or rhythmic foundation of the music. John Ritchie noted that:

> I always find it useful to learn solos on standards like 'All The Things You Are'. When I've listened through somebody like Hank Mobley or Coltrane playing some pretty straightforward bebop lines over it, I learn so many things not just about their style, but about the changes, too, and you find out that there are these particular ways of...thinking about the changes that we all have in common. I guess it kind of becomes ingrained in the way you listen and after

> you've played along and listened hundreds of times then you learn to anticipate the changes all the time...So, you're no longer just moving from one chord to another, but thinking in larger units of AAB, or whatever, and when I know that that's how a tune is structured, then I can make more of a shape and it sounds more meaningful. If I then go and listen to Lee Konitz playing, I hear the way he stretches the harmony and delays the normal resolution and things like that. But I'm always kind of expecting to hear the same thing, and have a sense of tension and resolution. (04-03-03)

Thus, the phrases musicians learn form part of the dynamic process of emplotment which are in turn sedimented into traditions. It is through this dynamic process that an improvisation is rendered intelligible; it is an interpretive process that ties together the discordant events of our temporal experience into a coherent plot, which in turn engenders a concordant readability to our experience. Furthermore, it provides the models in which we can foresee a possible order in our own experiences. Through transcription, this order is brought into a world of shared understanding and values. Improvisation is never understood intuitively or directly; it can only be learnt through the detour of other solos inscribed in the jazz tradition. As Ricoeur suggests, 'the productive imagination is not only rule-governed, it constitutes the generative matrix of rules' (1984: 68).

Conclusion: towards a narrative performativity

Rather than imposing limits on our self-understandings and forcing us to reiterate, as writers like Butler (1990) and Foucault (1977) have suggested, the traditions that are sedimented according to our efforts to be meaningful are dialectically linked to

creative innovations through the synthetic operations of our imaginations.[119] Moreover, this imagination is a social imagination since it becomes the medium for self-understanding.

Through this model of improvisation, we can begin to imagine an alternative to the performative paradigm, developed by Butler according to a Foucauldian framework, which understands every performative act as reproducing the social (Butler 1993, 1997). In chapter 5, I illustrated the ways in which jazz performativity can be understood in terms of discursive construction. The repetition of norms of intelligibility, such as certain ii-V-I cadence figures, reproduce social signifying norms and place the performer in a hierarchy of power relations that have power over, and appear more productive than, the improvisers themselves.

However, by introducing the mediating function of emplotment, which is subject to the norms and rules of intelligibility, these rules and norms can be re-interpreted as productive and generative of meaning, rather than prohibitive or distortive. The poetic activity of emplotment, in which individual occurrences are transformed into meaningful events, illustrates that the structural aspects of plots are constantly emerging. Each new experience shapes the music as the music gives shape to each new experience.

[119] Jason Goldman asked: 'Are these cats telling a story rather than reiterating, is that what you're asking?' (see appendix 1.9).

CHAPTER TEN

The Cultural and Poetic Work of Improvisation

Introduction

The observations outlined in the previous chapters have led me to understand that both the distancing analytical traditions of formalism and the phenomenological approaches which focus on the immediacy of the musical experience are remiss in terms of understanding the cultural and poetic work of improvisation. While the formalist perspective fails to acknowledge the temporal dimensions of improvisation and the exigencies of being-in-the-world, the phenomenological perspective is particularly misleading since it presupposes improvised music's fundamentally symbolic character and its capacity to mediate reality.

Improvisation's symbolic character brings to presentation the reality it unfolds through what I referred to earlier, with the help of Gadamer, as the phenomenon of *play*. Through performance, we bring to presentation what the music is, and this performance structures the experience we have of it. Musical performances do not owe their meanings to acts of institution; they are structures with a signifying function of their own (Gadamer 1994 [1960]: 155). The idea that the musical performance unfolds a unique reality and communicates a sense of being, to which only that particular performance can attest, and the related observation that it is this very structuring process that becomes the focus of the aesthetic activity where, in essence, there is 'no conceptual difference between being and playing' (Gadamer 1976: 55), are reminiscent of Geertz's understanding that human action is always symbolically mediated (1973).

These insights provide the springboard from which we can begin to make a number of connections between traditions, as sedimentations of symbolic representations developed in response to our existential condition, *poesis*, the ways in which we remake reality, and culture as a living reality in which people understand themselves and project a meaningful way of life. Indeed, far from being limited to the mere play of forms, a decorative excess, or an effusion of subjectivity, improvisation is itself a mediating function which gathers together in the course of performance, these manifold aspects of both our individual and cultural condition.[120] Thus, through a study of improvisation, we can begin to make the crucial link between the ontological value of musical performances and their ability to shed light on aspects of our experience, and the ways in which these performances are concretised in culture and engender self-understandings.

The symbolic quality of jazz improvisation

Rather than merely reiterating a discursively administered system of symbolic capital, the phrases that have become sedimented in the jazz tradition bear witness to the power of particular ways of configuring the world. The symbols of the jazz tradition do not have an instrumental value over which we gain power through correct procedure; rather, their value lies in an ability to bestow upon us meaning through which we understand ourselves.

According to Geertz, '...symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos, the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood, and their most comprehensive ideas of order' (Geertz as cited in Banton 1969: 3), and for

[120] This claim is supported by Gadamer who writes that '...the distinctive mark of the language of art is that the individual work gathers into itself and expresses the symbolic character that, hermeneutically regarded, belongs to all beings' (1976: 104).

Turner, a symbol is 'a blaze or landmark, something that connects the unknown with the known' (Turner 1967: 48). Geertz's study of the Balinese cockfight is perhaps one of the most instructive instances of a symbolic anthropology which in turn can inform a symbolic, or interpretive-hermeneutical (ethno)musicology.

By drawing parallels between cultural activities such as rituals and cockfights with literary texts, Geertz suggests that culture is an expression through which humans can understand themselves. For instance, he proposed that the cockfight is not simply a blood sport on which imprudent young men wagered far more money than they could afford; rather, it is an art form from which Balinese male villagers understand themselves. It addresses themes such as 'death, masculinity, rage, pride, loss, beneficence, chance', in a similar way that great novels and plays do, and structures them in such a way as to 'throw into relief a particular view of their essential nature' (Gadamer 1973: 443). In a challenge to the functionalist anthropologists, Geertz illustrates that the cockfight 'makes nothing happen' (1973: 443); it is purely a form of expression. Nothing can be gained from the cockfight in terms of status, no kinship alliances are reinforced and the political order remains intact. Instead, the cockfight, as a metaphor, communicates to the members of the society what it is to be human and what it is to be Balinese.

Could we not find in Geertz's symbolic anthropology an alternative to an analysis of improvisation which seeks to understand meaning in terms of the reinforcement of social markers or the reproduction of an existent reality? In other words, while it is clearly evident that musical genres have social and ethnic traits which can be identified and measured, is there not another, deeper reality to which

music attests and upon which a culture forms its self-understanding? Could we not, in fact, understand improvised performances as symbolic presentations of a meaningful way of life; as an image of the cultural imagination?[121] Geertz observed that in the cockfight, its symbolic significance surpasses its literal one in that 'the cockfight renders ordinary, everyday experience comprehensible by presenting it in terms of acts and objects...where their meaning can be more powerfully articulated and more exactly preserved' (Geertz 1973: 443). Similarly, improvisation articulates and preserves the cultural imagination which, in and of itself, is irreducible to direct identification, and can only attain meaning through mimesis. Thus, it is the productive, revealing capacity of improvisation to spring forth our human experience that endows it with cultural meaning. Correspondingly, the cultural dimension revealed in improvisation should not be explained according to iconic or semiotic homologies across cultural domains (Monson 1996; Feld 1988; Becker and Becker 1981); rather, culture is the manifestation of a meaningful way of life.[122]

The cultural work of improvisation

The cultural power of improvised music does not lie in its ability to express a direct resemblance between itself, as a sign, and an object in the cultural world; improvisation is not simply the reduplication of reality. Rather, its cultural power is inextricably linked to its immanent power to represent a meaning. Thus, the forms and structures of improvisation enclose the forms that structure meaning, mood and

[121] Roger Savage points out that 'the reality of culture is the concrete counterpart in which the productive operations of the cultural imaginary can be read. Like the analogical relation that cannot be seen directly but is nevertheless graspable in the lineaments of its symbolism, the cultural imagination is only discernable in terms of the mediation of its effects' (Savage 1994: 32).

[122] Our musical vocabularies, the signs and symbols of a musical language, therefore, have their efficacy in their ability to produce new meanings, rather than in their resemblance to, or correspondence with, the objective and conceptual world. Peirce's theory of iconicity is the basis for Monson's signifying process in jazz – in addition to many other ethnomusicological semiotics (see for example, Turino 1999) – and, as a result, she fails to capture the ways in which improvisation is an aesthetic augmentation, rather than a social reflection, of reality.

affect. They *augment* reality by capturing it in a network of abbreviated or condensed signs and symbols. Improvising, thus, is the refiguration of reality.

Canonic performances, such as Coltrane's original solo on 'Giant Steps', represent an objectification of a cultural working of the imagination in which meanings and values that signify a meaningful way of life are preserved. Ricoeur tells us that 'we understand ourselves only by the long detour of the signs of humanity deposited in cultural works. [The cultural work] is the very medium within which we can understand ourselves' (Ricoeur 1981: 143). This illustrates that our cultural identities are already interpretations of cultural works and performances, whose efforts to present and preserve a way of life unfold in front of us.[123]

Many of the musicians with whom I spoke were very candid in relating their experiences with improvisation. Their testimonies bear witness to the profound sense of being that is illuminated through performances. Since very few of my informants were professional musicians dependent on their talents to earn a living, they were not encumbered by the cynicism that often emerges from more seasoned, and disillusioned, musicians who may often spend a gig worrying about their tax returns rather than transforming their being-in-the-world.

I gained privileged access to a community whose commitment to jazz improvisation was sincere and earnest and whose dedication to develop their vocabulary so that they, too, could 'say something' was steadfast. As part of a

[123] Blacking similarly understood a dialectic between individual interpretation and a sense of belonging to a community. Participating in communal events, such as the Venda *tshinkona* dance, simultaneously contributes to a community's and an individual's self-understanding (Blacking 1973: 101-102).

cultural community, their humility towards tradition was not servile but loyal. The understanding that previous generations had seen the world in a particular way and had rendered their experiences through their music, engendered a respect that bound them across time and space and endowed meaning on their existence. The reasons 'Giant Steps' has gained its canonic status is because jazz improvisers have common experiences and share an understanding that great works *do* have something that make them great. 'Giant Steps', the 12 bar blues, 'Rhythm Changes', 'All The Things You Are' and other standards, have a universal appeal structure despite their potential to generate ever new meanings and interpretations.

Standing up and playing in a group, reproducing some of the energy that had been communicated with such vehemence by the Coltrane Quartet, the drenched soul by Lee Morgan or Cannonball Adderley, the elasticity and empathy by the 1960s Miles Davis Quintet, or the quiet melodic tenderness by Bill Evans, was an uplifting and enlarging experience for my informants which reached beyond a signification measured by sociological markers and ethnic traits. It was reality in the making. Often they were quite overcome with awe of improvised music's ability to augment their experiences. Isaac Darche concluded that improvisation was an essential part of his life:

> It takes me to this totally new place. I feed off it since it opens me up to these new worlds that you can't get from watching TV or, I dunno, sitting in a coffee shop. I'm lucky to have this in my life. (27-10-03)

Such profound musical experiences, in which musicians are often confronted with emotions of which they are perhaps previously unaware, are often complemented by a

rigorous understanding of theory and formal principles of improvisation, or what I have termed emplotment, the second stage in the dialectical mimetic process.

Rink's notion of 'performer's analysis' and 'rigorous analysis' (2002: 36), illustrated above, is informative in this regard. By taking into consideration the fact that a performer brings both expressive and analytical prerogatives to a musical performance, we can direct our attention to a performer's analysis which, as Rink observed, 'is not some independent procedure applied to the act of interpretation', but rather 'an integral part of the performing process' (2002: 36). Moreover, since Rink observes that this act of interpretation involves the overlooked dimension of temporality, a performer's analysis begins to look like Ricoeur's mimesis_2, the configurative act of emplotment.

However, contrary to Rink's performance theory design, a dialectical model based on a threefold mimesis understands improvisation in terms of a transformation, rather than a refraction, of being-in-the-world. Furthermore, rather than placing a performer's prerogatives at the centre of the performative model, by placing the autonomy of the world of the text (the inscribed documents or cultural works of the jazz tradition such as 'Giant Steps'), configured through *play*, at the centre, we can understand how our selfhood is shaped in front of, not behind, cultural works. Musical performances do not simply express emotions; they reveal qualities of the world, projecting attributes of the world that lie beyond objectivity. Similarly, improvisation does not stem from the recesses of being; rather, being is constituted by improvisation since, in improvising, musicians are constantly throwing their selves

into relief, bringing new aspects of them into view. It is through cultural narratives such as improvisation, that the self is mediated to itself.

In order to fully illustrate the claim that improvisatory performativity entails an explorative, heuristic function in discovering new qualities of reality, I elucidate the third stage of mimesis: appropriation.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Appropriation: Reference, Meaning and Selfhood

> I had been getting bored with the stereotyped changes that were being used all the time...and I kept thinking there's bound to be something else. I could hear it sometimes but I couldn't play it. Well, that night, I was working over 'Cherokee' and, as I did, I found that by using the higher intervals of a chord as a melody line and backing them with appropriately related changes, I could play the thing I'd been hearing. I came alive. (Charlie Parker as cited in Hentoff and Shapiro 1955: 312)

> Each true jazz moment...springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest, each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity: as individual, as member of the collectivity and as link in the chain of tradition. Thus, because jazz finds its very life in an endless improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazzman must lose his identity even as he finds it. (Ellison 1953: 234)

Introduction

The final stage in dialectically linking together a structural or formal dimension of an improvised performance with the dimension of cultural- and self-knowledge, is the stage of appropriation: mimesis_3. It is in this final analysis that we can identify the ways in which improvised performances refer beyond themselves to the reality of the world. This world is the application of the formal text-like properties of improvisation to the real world; it teaches us about something, not culture in its already finished form, but human experience itself. If improvisation did not have this referential function, its purpose would be lost and we would not be able to understand it.

The configurative dimension of improvisation mediates between an existent world of experience and a transformed one. This dialectic, importantly, is dependent on time, and it is through engaging with the narrative dimensions of time that improvised performances unfold, that our prior understanding of time is refigured, leading to a new understanding of the world. The time of improvisation is a synthetic one which orders experiential time into a plot, and mediates event – which is chronological in character – with story – which is transformative in character; it endows concordance onto the discordant experiences of time. Thus, it is the structure of improvisation and its dynamic reading of time – in which a chronological, episodic dimension of chord sequences is combined with the configurational act of 'grasping together' these manifold events into a temporal whole – which enable us to read our experiences in terms of the performance. This structure is mimetic of the real world; it relates to the temporal dimension of our mood. While mood is characterised by the anticipation of the future (Heidegger's *angst* 1962 [1927]) mediated by the memory of the past, improvising provides a mirror image. When we improvise or listen to improvisations, it is not so much the surprises that we expect to hear than the apprehension of episodes that are well known in leading us to a cadential point.[124]

It is clearly evident that the cadencing of improvised music endows it with its temporal charge. The transcriptions of 'Giant Steps' bear witness to the movement towards an ending, and it is in cadential figures, such as the bebop scale, that we are able to apprehend the episodes and understand the solo according to its endings. *Making* an improvised performance re-signifies the world in its temporal dimension to the extent that improvising is to remake mood.

[124] Again, this resonates with Kermode's idea of 'the sense of an ending' which enables us to explore the end point as the point from where the improvised performance can be seen as a whole (1966).

From immanent sense to outward reference

Following these insights, we can begin to consider dialectally both the immanent sense, or design of solos over the chord sequence of 'Giant Steps', and its outward reference to a world. As a result, the problematic status of music's non-representational, or self-representational character is resolved. While improvised music clearly does not have a reference comparable to the discourses of the sciences, or of descriptive language which refers to the world objectively, could we argue that there is a different type of reference unfolded by the performance – a reference that ordinary discourse cannot achieve?

Ricoeur develops his theory of reference in poetry in response to literary theorists who, like formalist musicologists, understand only a poem's inner constitution closed in on itself without any outward reference. These theorists and aestheticians consider the poem as a prolonged oscillation between sense and sound. In this context, evocative power eclipses any informative power. The distinction between descriptive and emotional discourses is paralleled in our understandings of music, since there is a common assumption among formalist musicologists that since music cannot reference an outward world, it must be directed inwards towards the soul. Ricoeur helps us to overcome this limitation by considering the ways in which a poem's suppression of direct referentiality in fact opens up a new way of relating to the world. A secondary, indirect reference addresses the world in a completely different way and reaches into the deeply rooted aspects of reality that are absent from everyday life led through the mode of empirical control and manipulation (Ricoeur 1978: 155). Can we not argue similarly that improvisation, as a poetic

mode, actively suspends the ordinary references of ethnicity and culture and projects new possibilities of redescribing the world in that mode?

In other words, our primary order references addressed by ordinary language – such as ethnicity, identity, gender, class and race – are fundamentally pragmatic, and comply with our interest in control and manipulation. Second order references, on the other hand, express a deeper, more fundamental aspect of our being-in-the-world and should, in fact, be considered as primary. Ordinary meaning is eclipsed in poetic discourse such as jazz improvisation, as it takes on a heuristic function in redescribing our experience. When considering the relationship between music and meaning, therefore, we can explore the ways in which music eclipses the didactic references of identity, race and gender, and references a figurative world of possibility instead. Thus, it is through an exploration of music's non-denotative function, rather than finding references in the social world to which we could extract a denotation, that a second order reference more pertinent to the music itself can be revealed.

Through a concept of appropriation, therefore, the listener or fellow group members' subjectivity becomes an extension of the improvised performance. The term dialogue, or conversation, has often been employed to illustrate this relationship (Monson 1996; Berliner 1994), but limited attention has been paid to the fact that it is the music that is addressing us and making a claim on us. This non-linguistic conversation requires both the performers and the listeners to suspend their judgement and open themselves up to the world proposed by the performance. By exposing ourselves to the music through appropriation, we are in turn exposing

ourselves to the objective structures of the improvised forms manifested through emplotment which embodies the world of the work.[125]

We can reasonably conclude, then, that what is at stake in understanding works of art and works of fiction is our selfhood. It is through performing and interpreting that we give a self to our being. Our selfhood is constituted by the world of the performance, itself embodied in formal structures. As culturally mediated humans, we find ourselves in the world, already present to a reality configured in texts, art works and musical performances.[126] Thus, any notion of subjective mood must be considered in terms of the result of our appropriation of musical performances rather than as an antecedent to the performance. We meet mood in musical performances. Musical performances bring mood into being and it is through musical performances that we discover dimensions of our experience that have no name. The reactions we feel when we perform or listen to music are not merely inner states; they are the consequence of being-affected by the performance. Thus, the mood of that performance becomes the iconic or symbolic representation of the performance as it is felt (cf. Ricoeur 1980: 155). It is precisely these feelings that generate new ways of being-in-the-world. It is through these feelings, iconically represented by the performance, that we become attuned to dimensions of reality that remain mute in terms of the objects referred to in ordinary discourse (cf. Ricoeur 1980: 156). Feeling is a result of the process of appropriation whereby we make ours

[125] Ricoeur writes: 'Henceforth, to understand is to understand oneself in front of the text. It is not a question of imposing upon the text our finite capacity of understanding, but of exposing ourselves to the text and receiving from it an enlarged self, which would be the proposed existence corresponding in the most suitable way to the world proposed' (1981: 143).

[126] We can compare two different routes to self-understanding and being, one short and the other long. Heidegger takes an ontological shortcut to *Dasein*'s perception of its own being, while Ricoeur favours the longer route: the long detour through the signs of humanity deposited in works of culture. Appropriation, thus, is the self-defining process through which *Dasein* meets itself in written discourse.

something that has been put at a distance via objective forms and structures. Feelings are 'interiorized thoughts' (Ricoeur 1980: 154).

A performative self

Through performing, the musician divests the self of an earlier self in order to receive a new self bestowed upon by the performance itself. Selfhood is transformed in *play* as musicians find themselves by losing their selves in the dynamic movement of *play*. Ricoeur writes that '...the metamorphosis of the world in play is also the playful metamorphosis of the ego' (1991b: 88). It is *play* that acts as the medium of this transformation; the self and being, thus, have a performative dimension.

Our subjectivities are decentred. Our sense of self cannot be found inside the deep recesses of our consciousnesses waiting to be released. Thus, any account of improvisation according to a mysterious principle locked in the improviser's mind, is fallacious since s/he always already finds selfhood in a culturally and textually mediated world. Improvisation is always already an interpretation. While the so-called 'New Musicologists' argue that the objective structures of formalism remove music from the cultural world and from human subjectivities, it is possible to contend this thesis with this insight that the formal patterning of improvised performances, unfolded in *play*, provides the very medium through which improvisers understand themselves.[127] Wynton Marsalis suggested that jazz is 'a painless way of understanding ourselves. That's really the best thing about art. You can learn about

[127] Gadamer famously wrote that 'Being that can be understood is language' (1994 [1960]: xxii). The hermeneutical insight that language is the medium through which understanding is realised, suggests that language does not merely report and describe; language creates experience. Our consciousnesses emerge from the dialogue we engage in with discourses and symbols.

yourself and you can have a good time doing it. That's what jazz music does for you' (Marsalis as cited in Ward 2001: vii).

A hermeneutics of jazz improvisation thus enables us to unravel a number of aspects of improvisation hitherto overlooked: namely the dimension of self-knowledge. Furthermore, by dialectically linking together other dimensions such as structural forms, history and phenomenological experience, it is possible to undertake a productive theory of improvisation which does not simply reject previous models and interpretation.

Text and performances

What is fascinating about jazz improvisation is the way in which it occupies an interstitial space between what we could refer to as oral and written discourse. While oral discourse emphasises the sense of presence, or the being-there of the performer, written discourse gains a semantic autonomy from the author since the text or performance does not coincide with the meaning. Improvisation involves a fusion of horizons of the world of the text and the world of performance. I have illustrated, through an elucidation of the forms and structures improvisers compose prior to, or in preparation of their performance, that improvisation, as a real time performance genre, contains a moment of inscription that makes it akin to a text with an autonomy of its own. By acknowledging this autonomy (the principal success of the formalist method), we understand that improvising involves a dialectic between structures that transcend the immediate dialogical situation – structures which develop a semantic autonomy from the performer's intentions that enable it to be understood on a par with composition – and performance contingent aspects. Thus, there is a threefold

relationship between the performer and the text; between the performer and other musicians; and, finally, between the performer and his or her selfhood.

In order to understand this threefold relationship, it becomes necessary to move beyond a mere recognition of these text-like properties towards an understanding that these structures free the reference of improvisation to open up vast potentials for creative representations of the world. In other words, the inscriptive, structural aspects of improvisation, sedimented in a cultural tradition, far from acting as points of departure or protocols, reveal a capacity to shape and project new worlds and horizons. Rather than denigrating the structural, formal, or written aspects of improvisation found in transcriptions, manuals and pedagogical resources, in favour of a recognition of its character as an oral discourse, I judge it worthwhile to reconsider the textual aspects of improvisation in terms that understand forms and structures in a more productive and re-productive sense than merely as a representation, or reiteration of pre-existing symbolic codes and values.[128]

If we follow Ricoeur's observation that writing is a *re-writing* of reality, can we not similarly argue that the forms and structures of improvisation, passed on

[128] The critique of text-based improvisation is mirrored in the anthropological recognition of the advantages of oral cultures in the transmission of communal knowledge (Smith 1991). Ricoeur similarly acknowledges (drawing on Rousseau and Bergson) that writing 'separates men just as property separates owners. The tyranny of the lexicon and of grammar is equal to that of the laws of exchange, crystallized in money. Instead of the Word of God, we have the rule of the learned and the domination of the priesthood. The break-up of the speaking community, the partition of the soil, the analycity of thought, and the reign of dogmaticism were all born with writing' (Ricoeur 1976: 39). Nooshin's argument that the privilege of text-based compositional practices over improvisatory ones represents a discursive hierarchy of text above orality, a hierarchy she attempts to deconstruct, illustrates the constructed and power-laden development of text-based traditions in the Western world (2003). However, Ricoeur defends the practice of writing by creating an analogy between writing and painting in which he introduces the term 'iconic augmentation'. Painting attempts to 'reconstruct reality on the basis of a limited optic alphabet. This strategy of contraction and miniaturization yields more by handling less. In this way, the main effect of painting is to resist the entropic tendency of ordinary vision – the shadow image of Plato – and to increase the meaning of the universe by capturing it in the network of its abbreviated signs' (Ricoeur 1976: 40-41). Writing, thus, is a *re-writing* of reality.

through transcriptions and textbooks, engender a metamorphosis, rather than a reduplication, of musical and cultural reality? In learning to improvise, we apply certain schemas and theoretical models – such as the chord-scale system in which the melodic minor mode serves as a basis for altered harmony – which allow us to hear the music in a certain way. To paraphrase Ricoeur, the entropic tendency of ordinary hearing is organised through these forms and networks and enables the production of new meaning. Branford Marsalis described Coltrane responding to journalists that he was 'primarily looking into certain sounds, certain scales...Not that I'm sure what I'm looking for, except that it'll be something that hasn't been played before' (Branford Marsalis as cited in Ward 2001: 435). He was finding ways to rewrite reality. Similarly, Charlie Haden explained that Coltrane was 'obsessed with learning how to get to what he was hearing...That's all he thought about. He generated this energy...that was almost like the energy of the sun. He lifted everything up when he played' (Haden as cited in Ward 2001: 434-435).

It is through these forms, networks and abbreviated signs inscribed in recordings and transcriptions such as 'Giant Steps', that meaning is exteriorised. As we interpret and appropriate, we recover the meaning from the distant estrangement of these texts' formal design and make them our own. Surely, this is precisely the process we call improvisation.[129] Moreover, the dialectic between distanciation and appropriation and explanation and understanding that improvising entails provides us with inroads towards a more insightful model than previous models which simply posit a continuum in which we can measure the degree of improvisation or

[129] This dialectical model is especially useful for improvisation since it can refer to the improviser interpreting the inscribed world of patterns and phrases found in recordings and text-books, to fellow band members who interpret as they listen to each other, and to listeners who similarly interpret while they listen. Moreover, the model can be applied to performance more generally.

composition ranging from slow-composition to rapid-composition, fixed and free (Nettl 1974, 1998), since it opens up the world of non-ostensive reference and points to new horizons. Furthermore, this model indicates that it is through improvising – through the relinquishment of our egos to the worlds that improvisation unfolds – that we gain our selfhood.

The activity that takes place between a musical text and a performance is not simply one of reproduction. Correspondingly, the relationship between the listener and the musical performance can not be characterised as detached contemplation. Rather, performances are characterised by a willingness to make the performance have meaning in terms of our experiences and horizons. Similarly, the aesthetic attitude of the listener should be characterised by the willingness to attempt to understand what the music is saying to us – what claims it is making on our being. Performing, therefore, is appropriating. Not in the sense of expropriation – as was implied by Cook's comment that performance has been considered as the reproduction of texts (2004: 7) – but as the process of making what was alien become one's own (cf. Ricoeur 1981: 113). Thus, as appropriation – as making *ours* – all performing entails a self-understanding. Appropriating, or performing, as Angeles Sancho-Velazquez points out, involves a risk – 'the risk of losing one's self in the process. It is only after having risked and lost the self that the self can be recuperated and enlarged by the apprehension of the world proposed by the work' (Sancho-Velazquez 1994: 38).

Improvisation and the world of action

At the level of mimesis$_3$, a final thought on the improvisatory imagination and the ways in which improvisation mediates a configuration of our temporal being-in-the-world disclosed as mood, with a refiguration of our world of experience in terms of the formal structure of the performance, leads us to the idea of the social imaginary. The social imaginary, according to Ricoeur, rests on a pivot at which ideology and utopia fall at the limits (Ricoeur 1996).

Ideologies, on the one hand, preserve a society's order constituting a communal, integrated sense of itself; utopias, on the other hand, imagine something else: a rupture or discontinuity. Ricoeur writes that while 'all ideology repeats what exists by justifying it, and so gives a picture of what is...Utopia has the fictional power of redescribing life' (Ricoeur as cited in Kearney 1998: 165). Improvisation operates on both of these levels: it preserves an order through identifying with particular phrases deposited in the tradition – phrases which contribute to an enduring sense of self-identity[130] – while also probing for new and different solutions and emerging possibilities. In other words, improvisation mediates between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation, between the reproductive imagination and the productive imagination.

Again, it is only through a *dialectical* interpretive method that we can understand how improvisation overcomes the distinction between these two poles. Thus, rather than denigrating a Kantian transcendental free play of the imagination as

[130] For example, Berliner writes that 'despite stylistic changes over time, jazz retains the continuity of certain underlying practices and values associated with improvisation, learning, and transmission. These factors of continuity, moreover, rest at the very core of the tradition, contributing to its integrity as a music system' (Berliner 1994: 14).

bourgeois aestheticism, the productive imagination projects possible worlds and critiques ideology.[131] In other words, when improvising, on the one hand it is necessary to coax utopian expectancies nearer to the present through a respect and recognition of tradition and inherited meanings; while on the other hand, improvisers must not cling on too dearly or hold blindly to this tradition, but rather liberate their potentials and project into the future.

For many, this will appear self-evident, but the fact that improvisation, as a social imagination, has a role in both maintaining ideological continuity through the recollection of shared symbols from the past in the course of performance, and challenging this very consensus by introducing a rupture, sheds light on its social significance. In other words, it is precisely when the utopian, productive, free play of the imagination is counterpoised with the symbols of a community, that these symbols avoid becoming fixed and fetishised.[132] An excessively utopian image, by contrast, would cut itself off from the space of experience and our shared debt to tradition, and sacrifice us to the future (Kearney 1998: 167).

At the final level of the cultural world of action, a study of improvisation ought to take into account this complementary relationship between ideology and utopia and explore the ways in which it mediates between the two poles, thus placing it in a privileged position as a manifestation of the socio-cultural imagination in our

[131] For Bloch, music excels above any other art form in its capacity to elucidate both the possibilities and dangers of 'venturing beyond' our lived moments of experience (1986[1959]: 32). He identifies music as the 'shaping of a call' (Bloch 1986 [1959]: 1067). Bloch does not see utopia negatively, but rather sees it as an affective hope. Hope, therefore, points to the plenitude of, rather than absence of, utopia. Hope is not a transcendental 'other' place which, if we fail to reach it, we will only experience lack. Hope is immanent and emerging in our present; it is not separated from it. Hope gives a temporal trajectory towards the future while still maintaining recognition of the present location of being.

[132] Ricoeur writes that ideology distorts what is 'real' 'when the integrative function becomes frozen...When schematization and rationalization prevail' (Ricoeur 1986: 266).

modern world. The forms that manifest themselves during the course of performance represent a mediation of human experiences that in turn is indissoluble from a past we remember and a future that speaks to us. It is through improvising that cultures create themselves, and as a poetics of the imagination, improvisation lights a flame of possibility.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I wish to briefly summarise the model I have been developing in order to link together the different aspects of this dissertation. As this dissertation has progressed, I have explored different dimensions of an improvised performance: the formal, the historical, the phenomenological and the hermeneutic.[133] The formal dimension of improvised music has been concerned with improvisation as a system of signs, with rules or operations and interrelationships. This level of enquiry focused on the structural dimensions of improvisation and explored the ways in which an improvisation is a composition in real-time. At this level, I have been concerned with the question: how does an improvisation function? I identified the vocabulary musicians use and how they develop a coherent structural identity throughout their solos. However, this dimension of improvisation cannot be studied in isolation. It became necessary to understand the ways in which improvisations are based within a tradition and have a symbolic heritage on a historical level. At this dimension, I situated improvisation within stylistic layers of meaning that relate to the canonic development of a jazz tradition.

[133] In his introduction to *A Ricoeur Reader*, Mario Valdés identifies a similar four-dimensional examination of Ricoeur's study of literary texts as a basis for literary criticism (Valdés 1991: 27).

The third dimension is the phenomenological which has provided insights into the ways in which we *experience* improvisation on an intersubjective level. This level explores the notion of *play*, and the ways in which improvisation brings to presentation a variety of temporal experiences. The ultimate dimension is the attainment of self-knowledge: the hermeneutical level. In short, it is through improvising that the autonomy of the compositional design fuses with our experience of the world and changes the ways in which we understand ourselves.

With these dimensions in mind, I outlined a threefold model in which improvisation shares attributes with Ricoeur's threefold mimesis – initially developed as a model in which time and narrative are dialectically linked. Since conceptual models are remiss in capturing our experience of time, Ricoeur developed a narrative model to illustrate how it is only via narratives that we can understand the human qualities of time. I have endeavoured to understand improvisation according to a narrative and explore the ways in which it, too, engenders a unique temporal cadencing.

The model is characterised by three dialectical levels: prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. We have a prefigured understanding of improvisation since we share and participate in the jazz culture through its language. There can be no improvising without the collective basis of the jazz language and culture. Moreover, we have in common an existential experience of the temporal uncertainties of the future through our moods. Configuration refers to the compositional process and brings forth the formal, stylistic and historical dimensions of improvisation and brings concordance to our existential anxieties. Finally, refiguration refers to the

phenomenological dimension of experiencing the text. It refers to the performative dimension of appropriation in which a fusion of horizons joins together the synthetic world of the text with the experiences of the performer in real time. This phenomenological dimension leads to a hermeneutical dimension of self-understanding and culture.

Thus, there is a dialectical move *between* virtual, immanent structures of musical form and cultural meaning and selfhood. Analytical precision is necessarily linked to ontological testimony. The purpose of this model is not to determine absolute meanings for improvisation. It is by no means an attempt to identify a method which enables us access to objective truth. Rather, the model helps to account for the shared experiences we enjoy when participating in improvisation. It accounts for the enduring value of improvisation, and illustrates that it is through participating together in cultural traditions such as jazz that we gain truth and meaning *together*, as a community.

Rather than rehearsing the argument levelled against the formal features of improvisation by the post-structuralist so-called 'New Musicologists', in which these features are interpreted in terms of the continuous iteration of ideological and bourgeois values, this model considers the ways in which significant symbols of the past are given renewed life in present contexts. Improvisation is a dialogic encounter between two partners: the performers and the music. Since this relationship is dynamic, it will always unfold new meanings and will never merely statically re-iterate the same values. As a symbolic system, jazz improvisation constantly makes

and remakes the world.[134] Furthermore, as a function of the cultural imagination, improvisation provides the medium through which we can receive an enlarged understanding as we respond to and appropriate these symbols. And, since these symbols are shared, improvisation celebrates community and being-with-others.

At the third mimetic level of appropriation and reference, we can finally reconsider the nature of the jazz language, and explore some answers posed by the theses developed in this dissertation concerning creativity in the jazz language and how it relates to the codes, protocols and structures imposed by this language. The improvisatory language is neither an intentionality of subjective consciousness, as argued by a phenomenological method, nor an objective and impersonal structure which predetermines the performance; it is both at once. The application of musicological formalism to jazz improvisation enabled an objective description of the codes and prototypes used in improvised performances. This description does not necessarily eliminate creativity since musicians always find new ways of expressing the objective paradigms made available by the jazz language.

My various transcriptions have clearly illustrated that musicians work within codes and grammars which govern creativity and enable them to stretch the codes to the limit. The jazz language is inventive despite its structural codes; while these codes may in themselves be inert and immobilised, the musician's powers to rejuvenate them bear witness to the creative potentialities of this language. As the jazz language became more complex and embraced the modernist challenges of bebop, it reflected a different realm of order. It shattered the traditional paradigms of

[134] Cf. Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art* (1976). Ricoeur draws on Goodman's idea that literary works make and remake the world: 'the *poeisis* of emplotment is a making that, also, bears on what is made' (Ricoeur 1984: 245).

order found in the popular song form and challenged the performer and listener towards imaginative variations of the world. Improvisers invent new ways of telling the same story; belonging to a shared *imaginaire*, a common symbolic heritage, they receive a tradition and recreate it poetically to signify something new, and in the process discover who they are.

With this in mind, I hope to have illustrated that through improvisation, a potential intersection between poetic and cultural discourse emerges. When we separate the realms of the figurative from the cultural and conceptual, we create a blind spot which misses both the creativity of cultural and conceptual knowledge, and the truth claims of *poesis*. The hermeneutical insight that abandons the idea that we have direct and immediate apprehensions of meaning and suggests instead that we understand existence and ourselves through the mediating detour of music, myth, narratives and art, enables us to overcome this potential blind spot. Our moods are always already symbolically structured in signs and interpreted according to cultural traditions. When we perform music, we are building on this primary interpretation of mood; performing music, thus, is always a redefinition process. In the course of performance we re-interpret what has already been defined and interpreted through cultural works and symbols. Performing displaces moods on to a new plane; it iconically augments our mood according to the structures the performance unfolds. Ricoeur tells us that 'a hermeneutics of language is not to rediscover some pristine immediacy but to mediate again and again in a new and more creative fashion' (Ricoeur 1991a: 468).

CONCLUSION

The Culture and Poetics of Jazz Improvisation

A poetics of improvisation involves an understanding of the human capacity to make a world in which we can poetically dwell. T.S Eliot once wrote that 'genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood' (1951: 1) and it is in the incandescent power of communication which allows new worlds to shape our understandings of ourselves in which I have sought to locate my study of improvisation. By paying attention to improvisation's mode of communicability through which our temporal experience is brought to presentation, we can link improvisation to a *poeisis a se*, a poetic reality in the making. Improvised music reveals a complexity of time experiences while it simultaneously suspends the tensions poetically that exist between, on the one hand, cosmological, and on the other, phenomenological experiences of time. Improvised performances bring the world to a stand.[135] In common with writing a poem, painting, narrating a story or any other performance, improvisation represents an example of the productive imagination. Improvised performances are productive in that they not only represent reality but increase reality, and poetically expand the ways in which we exist in the world as temporal and affected beings. Art works and the imagination, thus, are not just accessories; they augment reality.

We learned from Heidegger that our moods are the disclosure of being in its purest ontological state; furthermore, he tells us they our temporal. Thus, the

[135] Heidegger notes that in an artwork, the world is 'brought to a stand' (1971: 15-88). Ferrara similarly notes that 'great music grounds the world of the composer as the world is "brought to a stand" in the experience of the music' (1984: 357).

temporality that improvisation brings to light is also a communication of being. Improvisation *makes* being. And since Ricoeur tells us that there can be no understanding of being without the cultural signs and works in which we read our own experiences, we can conclude that it is through the external, symbolic marks which materialise themselves through performance (rather than existing on a separate realm from performances) that we first abbreviate, through musical signs, symbols and forms, and then intensify, being, which is experienced through, or in front of, these musical signs and symbols.

By adding the dialectic of distanciation and appropriation to this thesis, I have attempted to conjoin the ontological observation that 'music speaks being' with an epistemological insight into the compositional devices that form stylistically coherent improvised gestures. As synthetic structural devices, the compositional forms I outlined at length in chapter 4 and analysed in terms of 'Giant Steps', do not represent the imposition of a structure, but the working of a cultural imagination as it steers an intelligible and meaningful path between the sedimentation of tradition and innovation; the space of experience and the horizon of expectation; ideology and utopia.

Thus, improvisation reveals three aspects of the imagination: the poetical imagination in which new aspects of being are disclosed; the social imagination in which the poles between ideology and utopia and tradition and innovation are mediated, enabling the maintenance of coherence within a community; and the ethical

imagination in which we face a responsibility towards others in spite of the post-modern experience of depthless surfaces.[136]

In light of this, the principal motivation governing my concern to develop such a poetics of improvisation was in response to the so-called 'crisis of imagination' declared by post-modern and post-strucutralist thinkers whose influence reached musicology during the 1980s and 1990s. These theoretical paradigms have eroded our belief in what they disparagingly refer to as a romantic, bourgeois, idealist understanding that the human imagination can create new images. The concept of structure in music has undergone a similar critique. It has been argued that autonomous structures exist merely for the sake of disinterested, aesthetic contemplation. According to the post-modernists, a disinterested, worldless, free play of the imagination is alien to the social realities of performers and listeners. Furthermore, structures and coherence in musical works and performances, far from representing the imagination and aesthetic transcendence, are considered as discourses replete with alienating ideologies.[137]

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[136] It is through the imagination, as Ricoeur points out, that we understand our responsibility to an other. Ricoeur writes: '...without imagination there is no action...[it provides the] "luminous clearing"' (Ricoeur 1991b: 177) wherein we can consider possibilities and make ethical judgments towards others. Improvisation, thus, is a testimony to the fecundity of Gadamer's concept of *play* illustrated in chapter 8. As musicians improvise, they divest themselves of their ordinary selves by entering into *play* and receiving new selves conferred by the music itself. Improvisers give themselves up to the music and to the others they are playing with and together openly explore new possibilities.

[137] However, the so-called 'New Musicological' critique of absolute music shares some of the same intellectual heritage as my own hermeneutical reading of improvisation. Heidegger's observation that 'Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man' (1971: 146), influenced a generation of scholars via the work of Derrida who attempted to expose writing as an ideologically grounded means of expression. For Derrida, language is dead, and meanings have already been exhausted. Deconstruction in music, which has been to date the motivational principle governing the so-called 'New Musicology', explores the repressive mechanisms that conceal *and* shape musical expression. Music as a discourse, in turn, masters us. While Ricoeur understands the distancing effect that Heidegger ascribes to language and texts in terms of a productive dialectic which increases understanding, Derrida and his deconstructivist disciples notice the opposite effect. Deconstruction is an activity which lays bare the multiple interpretations inherent in the text and neutralises any claim to truth. Ricoeur, on the other hand is dedicated to maintaining a reference point which is reality and being-in-the-world. Thus, according to him, the author is not dead; rather s/he is in a constant dialogue with reality in which meaning is constantly being transformed.

Gary Tomlinson, an ambassador for the so-called 'New Musicological' tradition, writes that it is absurd to think that music can mean independently of the cultural matrices that individuals build around it. He subsequently chastises such a position as an '...internalist ideology that has led most writers on jazz...to seek its "essence" primarily or exclusively in its musical features' (Tomlinson 1991: 247). I hope to have illustrated that these musical features do indeed serve as a repository of meaning with an ability to *transcend* the cultural matrices that individuals build around it, to enjoy an independent afterlife, to embody referential meanings and augment them by bringing them into presentation through *play*, to enter into new and different cultural contexts and to increase reality by capturing it in its network of abbreviated signs and symbols. This power gives music, as a consequence, the ability to enlarge our experience and to give shape to both cultural and ontological reality by virtue of its unique temporal charge.

The clash between understanding music in terms of contexts and intentionality on the one hand, and in terms of an autonomous structured system independent from contexts and intentionality on the other, can be tempered by arguing for a relative autonomy of structures. However, this autonomy necessitates a dialectical counterpart in the form of appropriation. In performance, in other words, we struggle to make our own the meanings exteriorised in structures. While it is true that the structures and forms exist at a great distance from us spatially, temporally and culturally (and thus considered by musicologists such as Tomlinson as incapable of transmitting meaning), through appropriating this distant world our being is expanded and other worlds become our own. Ricoeur describes reading, like performing, as the *pharmakon*, or the remedy, with which we can salvage the meanings from the rupture

of distanciation and put them into '...a new proximity, a proximity which suppresses and preserves the cultural distance and includes the otherness within the ownness' (Ricoeur 1976: 43).

Via a detour through alternative phenomenological accounts of improvised music as a mode of communication – especially Gadamer's notion of *play* and Heidegger's notion of the *ready-to-hand* – I have developed a hermeneutical account of improvisation based on the threefold mimetic structure that links time and narrative as outlined by Paul Ricoeur. The most important aspect of this model, as I applied it to improvisation, is its dialectical nature. Through this model we are able to clearly envisage a dialectical *relationship* between forms and structures – the configuration of improvised music in its own space – and culture, tradition, innovation and selfhood. As a reality in the making (*poeisis a se*), improvisation shapes our world. The culture of jazz improvisation in turn is the concretisation of this shaping. I have tried to demonstrate this important relationship between poetics and culture through a symbolic understanding of the jazz tradition in which engaging with jazz music throws into relief particular aspects of our being. Jazz teaches us about reality; it deals with reality. As Wynton Marsalis states:

> Jazz celebrates life – human life. The range of it. The absurdity of it. The ignorance of it. The greatness of it. The intelligence of it. The sexuality of it. The profundity of it. And it deals with it in all of its...it *deals* with it. (Marsalis as cited in Ward 2001: xii)

As a form of narrative performativity, improvisation also entails a form of selfhood. Rather than reflecting or reproducing a known cultural world, through

improvising, this known, ostensive world is suspended by the non-ostensive world disclosed by the performance. This performance in turn presents through an analysable and formal structure an ontological world. The analytical structure of the performance-world mediates our encounter between the ontological world and our reflexive appropriation. This encounter engenders self-understanding. Thus, appropriation suggests a theory of selfhood which emerges not through self-projection, but through the world that is disclosed by the performance. Meaning, following this theory, is not a static object; it takes the form of a dialogue which makes a claim upon each partner, revealing a new capacity for self-knowledge.

A final thought considers the extent to which the dialectical model also enables us to reconsider the relationship between music and feeling without recourse to psychological explanations. In other words, rather than existing as antecedents to our performances – inward states of mind or mental experiences which attend physical states (which are everyday emotions) – feelings accompany the process of schematisation unfolded in performances. Our feelings are co-extensive with the structuring of the performance. Mood, imagination and feeling, therefore, emerge in our encounter with the performance-world which suspends our normal known world, and forces us to re-locate ourselves. As we grasp the deep temporal structures of the performance, our selves are transformed via the return route to the known world. Accordingly, we grow in relation to, or in tension with, the world of the performance and the ontological world it discloses. The reference of improvisation is the projection of a world. It thus has a semantic, rather than simply ornamental, import. This final insight makes it possible to make the bold claim that a musical language,

restructured by emplotment, leads to an enlargement of our own experience in accordance with the narrative nature of the performance. John Blacking writes that:

> The value of music is, I believe, to be found in terms of the human experiences involved in its creation. There is a difference between music that is occasional and music that enhances human consciousness, music that is simply for having and music that is for being. I submit that the former may be good craftsmanship, but that the latter is art, no matter how simple or complex it sounds, and no matter under what circumstances it is produced. (Blacking 1973: 50)

Thus, the second, perhaps deeper concern that lies at the heart of this dissertation springs from a desire to account for the human experiences that face extinction in our media-saturated age, where the capacity to creatively refigure our experiences of the world has been passed on to remote controls. The meaningfulness of jazz improvisation does not lie primarily in its ability to reflect socially constructed identity, or to reinsert hegemonic notions of masculinity, or to essentialise imperialistic notions of rugged individualism. This is only a second level interpretation of music's meaning. At a more primary level, exists an invitation into a set of possibilities, into a way of living together, into imagining otherwise. Jazz can resolve the tensions we experience in a poetic and aesthetic way. Jazz, like any art, does not resolve ambiguity; it promotes and celebrates it, unfolding a world which shatters the preconceptions of our quotidian existence, and calls forth a different way of being.

A study of the culture and poetics of improvisation stands at a juncture in which theoretical reflection must be complemented by practical application. Once

again, we are suspended between the dialectic of understanding and explanation. It is only through a reflection on one's own understanding of improvised music that such interpretations and objective explanations that have been outlined in this dissertation can be completed by the reader. In turn, the reader's own understanding will shape a new set of explanations. This model may be considered circular by many. It may resemble an interpretive claustrophobia in which a search for true meaning is eclipsed. However, I consider that each new understanding represents a broadening of horizons – horizons which constantly recede as we approach them and invite us to think and experience more in light of the possibilities they disclose.

Having outlined a dialectical model for improvisation, further studies are required to test its explanatory power and interpretive efficacy in different cultural and musical contexts. Furthermore, the dimension of time, briefly discussed in this dissertation, warrants a much richer exploration with regards to improvised music. The ways in which time is poetically shaped and brought into tension through musical performances would require a detailed study beyond the confines of the present work. Similarly, a more sustained understanding of the symbolic quality of particular musical gestures as they relate to mood would shed invaluable insights into an understanding of improvised music's unique capacity to say something.

Learning to improvise is a multiple hermeneutic process in which the self is transformed through a number of levels – performative, textual, experiential and cultural – in which culture is shaped as a repository of this productive imagination. Transcribing, listening *and* performing constitute a cyclical journey, dialectically linked, in which musicians grow and extend their horizons as performers and selves,

and shape a world in which they can live together in culture and project new possibilities. Improvising mediates between musicians and their worlds; between musicians and fellow musicians; and between musicians and their selves. Thus, the related dimensions of reference, communication and self-understanding are united through this dynamic and constantly rejuvenating imaginative activity. Moreover, as a dialogue between the space of experience and the horizons of expectation, improvisation gives us a path in which we can simultaneously reanimate tradition and pull utopia closer into view.

Appendix

1.1: 'Cry Me a River' lick (Coker 1991: 75)

George Benson, guitar ("Billie's Bounce")

295. 

Randy Brecker, trumpet ("Gregory Is Here")[13]

296. 

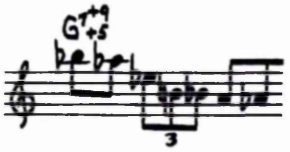
Kenny Dorham, trumpet ("Woody 'n' You")[13]

297. 

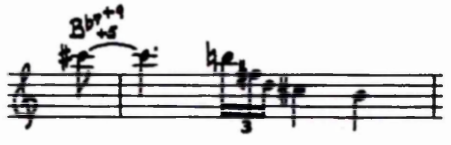
Lee Morgan, trumpet ("Most Like Lee")

298. 

Dizzy Gillespie, trumpet ("Stardust")

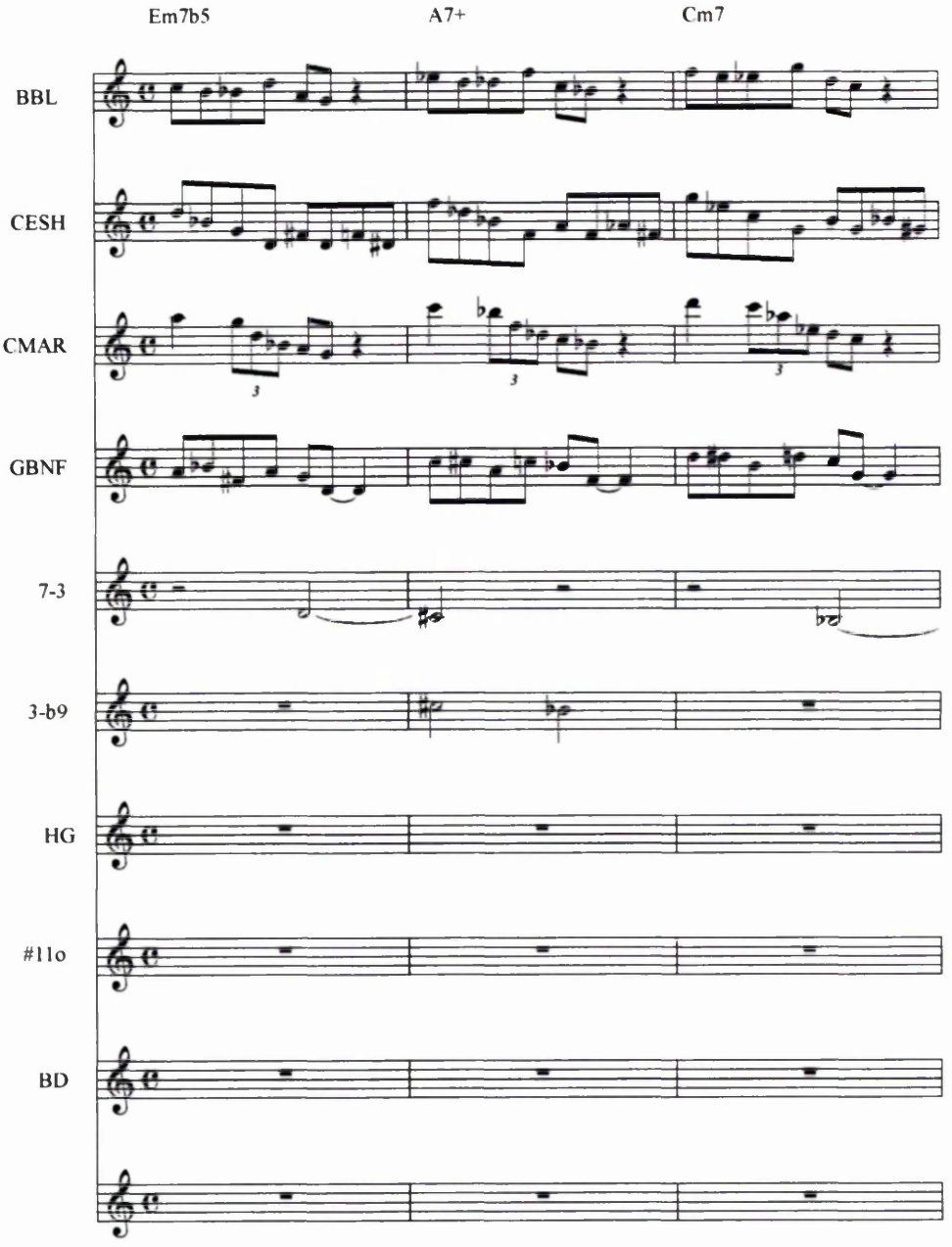
299. 

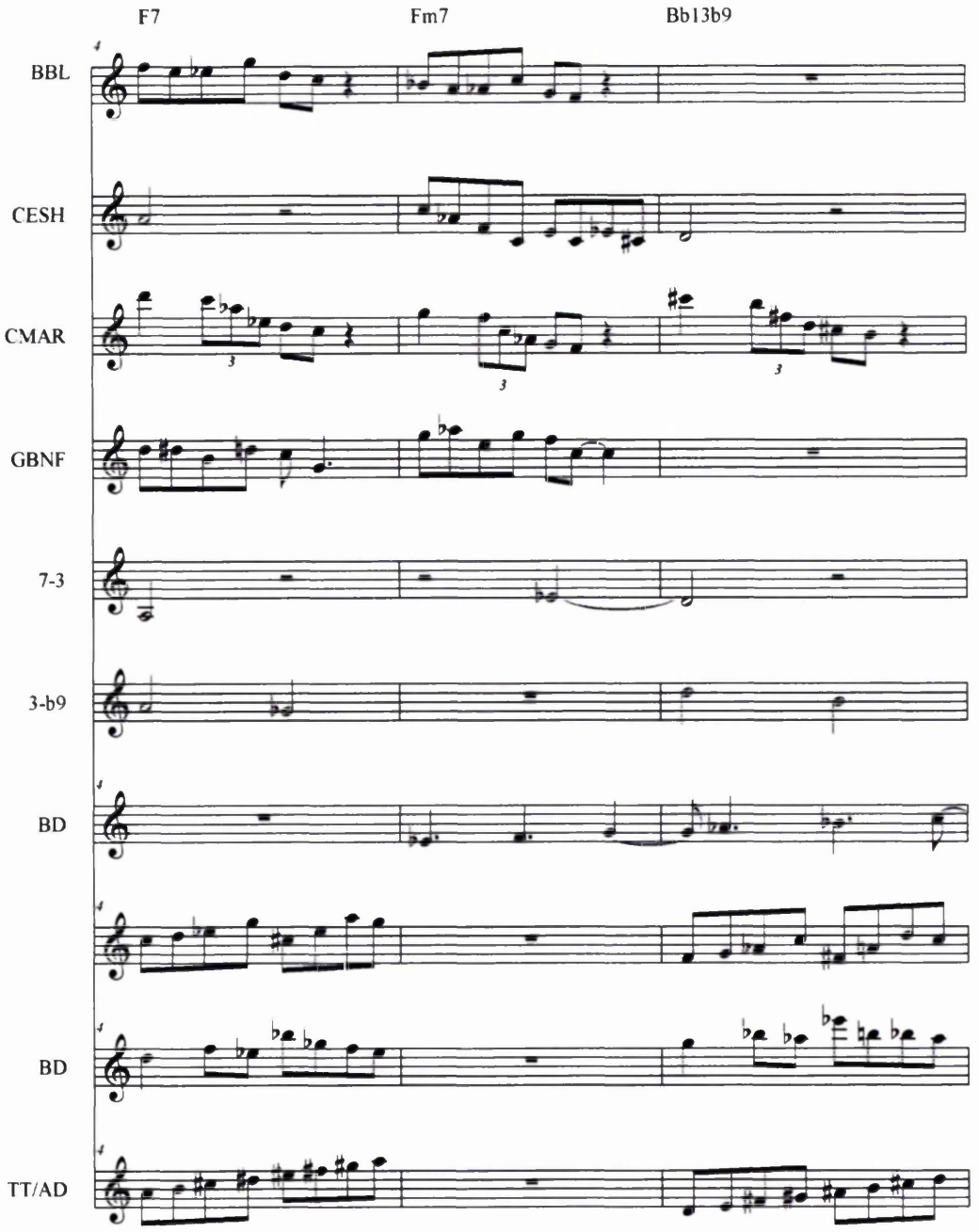
Hank Mobley, tenor saxophone ("Ecaroh")

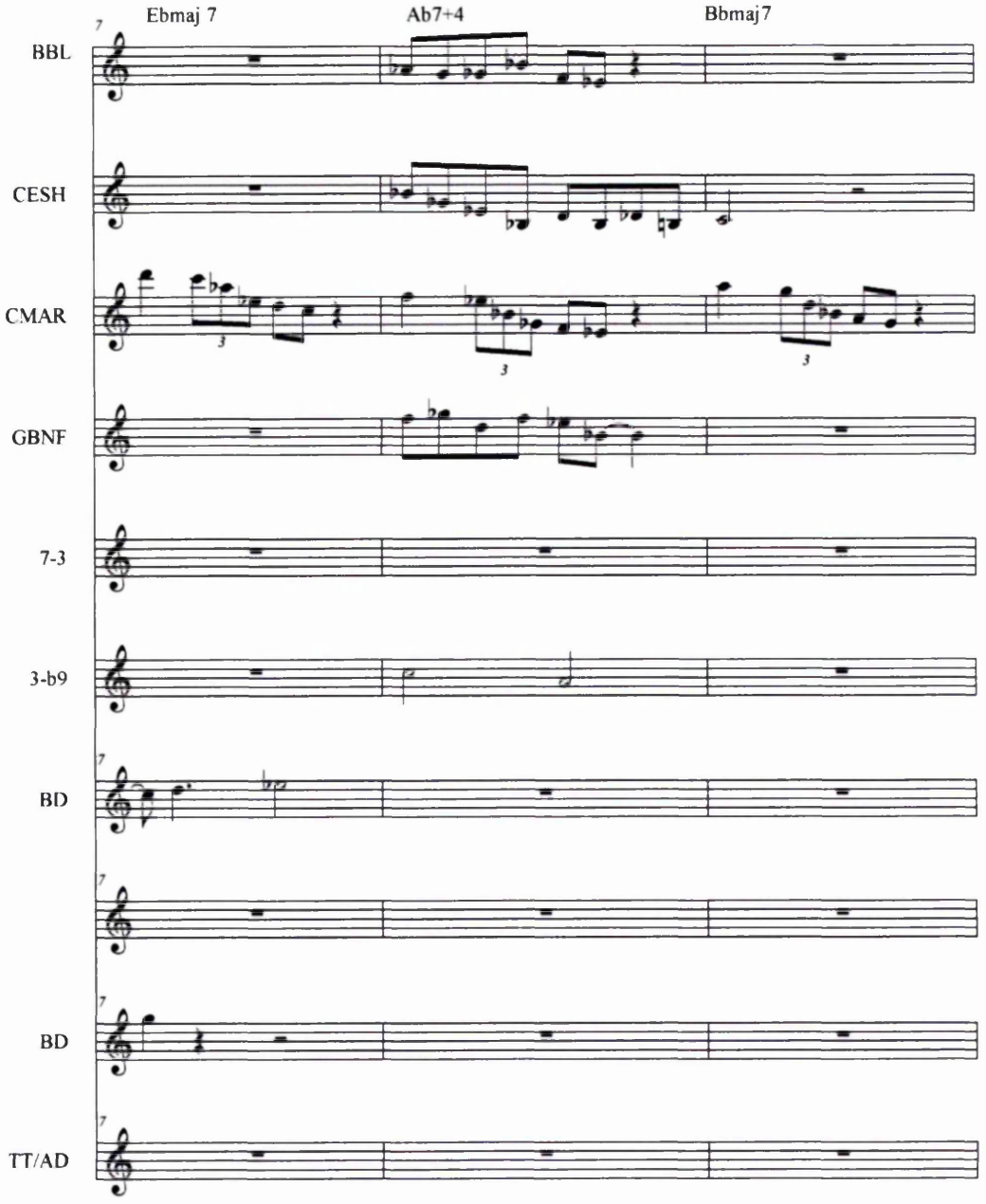
300. 

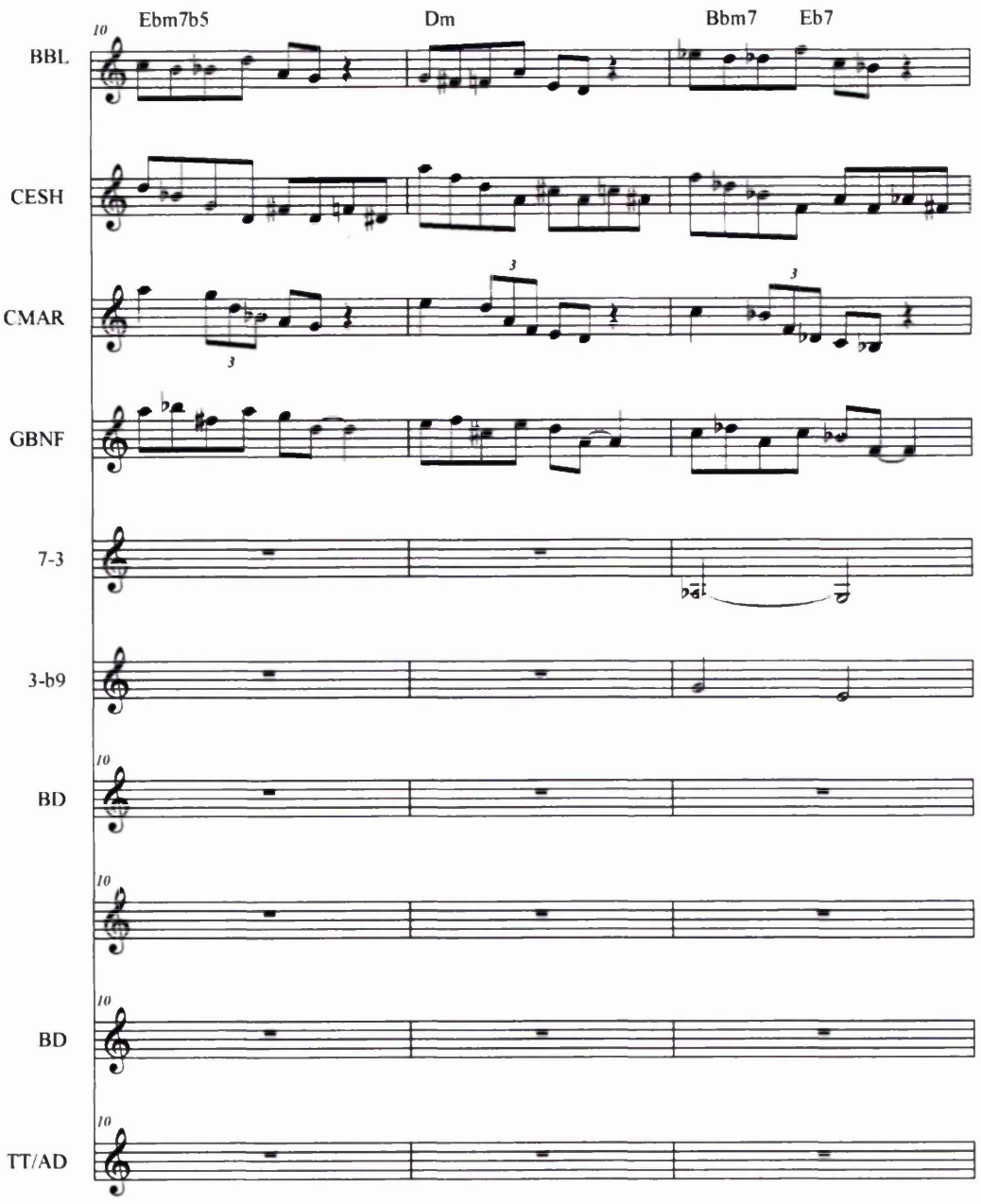
[13] - the "Cry Me A River" lick is used three times in this solo.

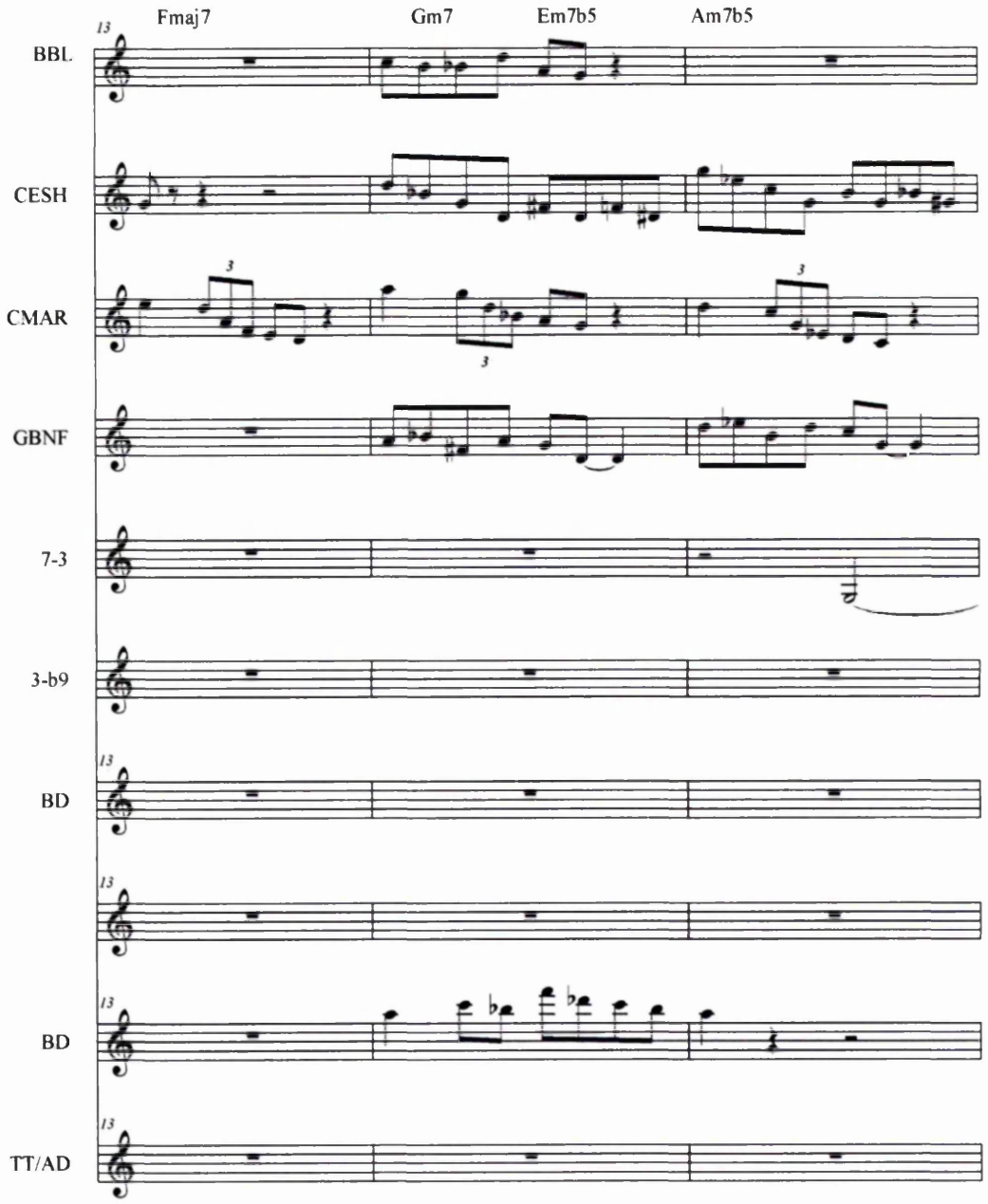
1.2 'Stella by Starlight'

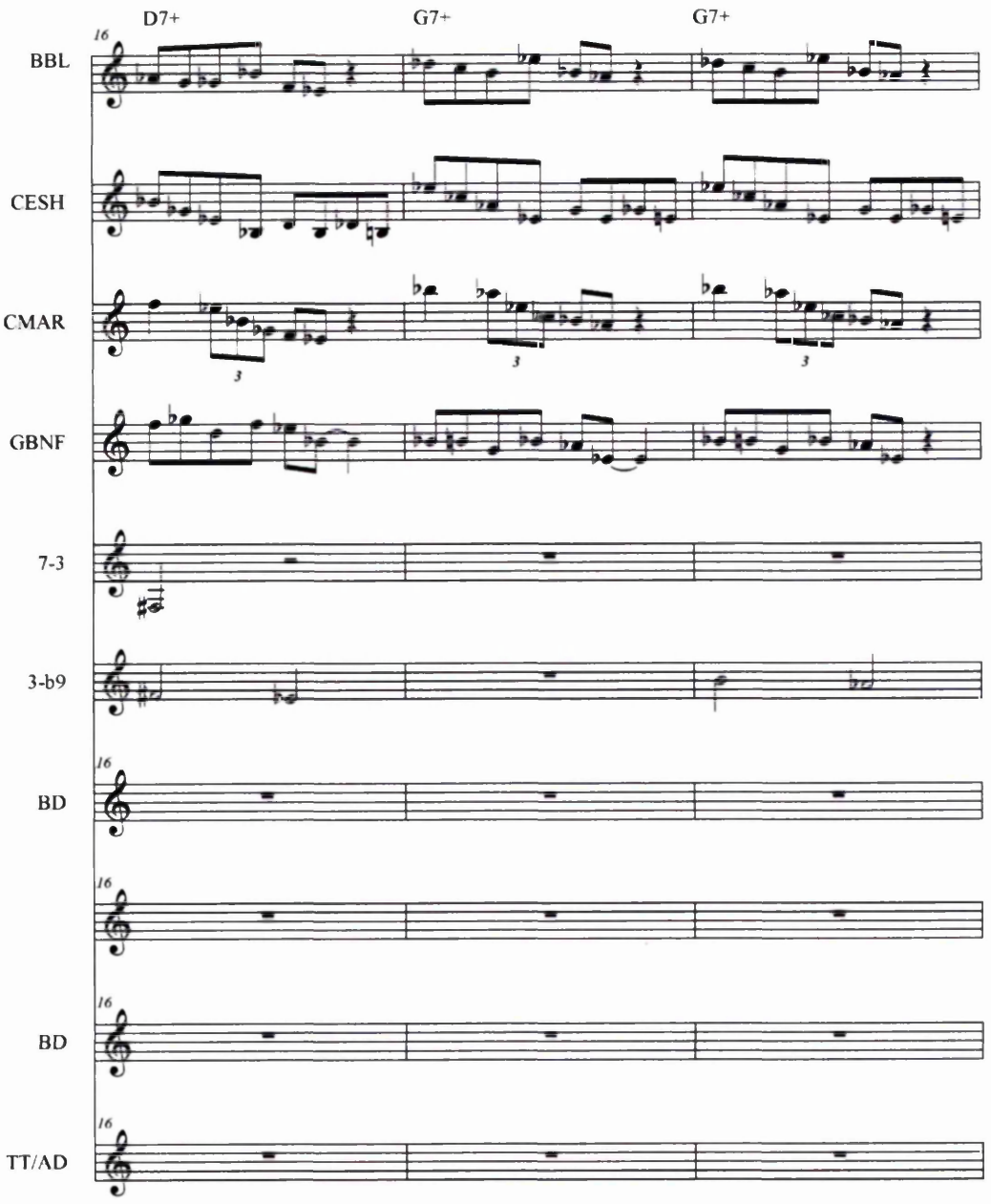


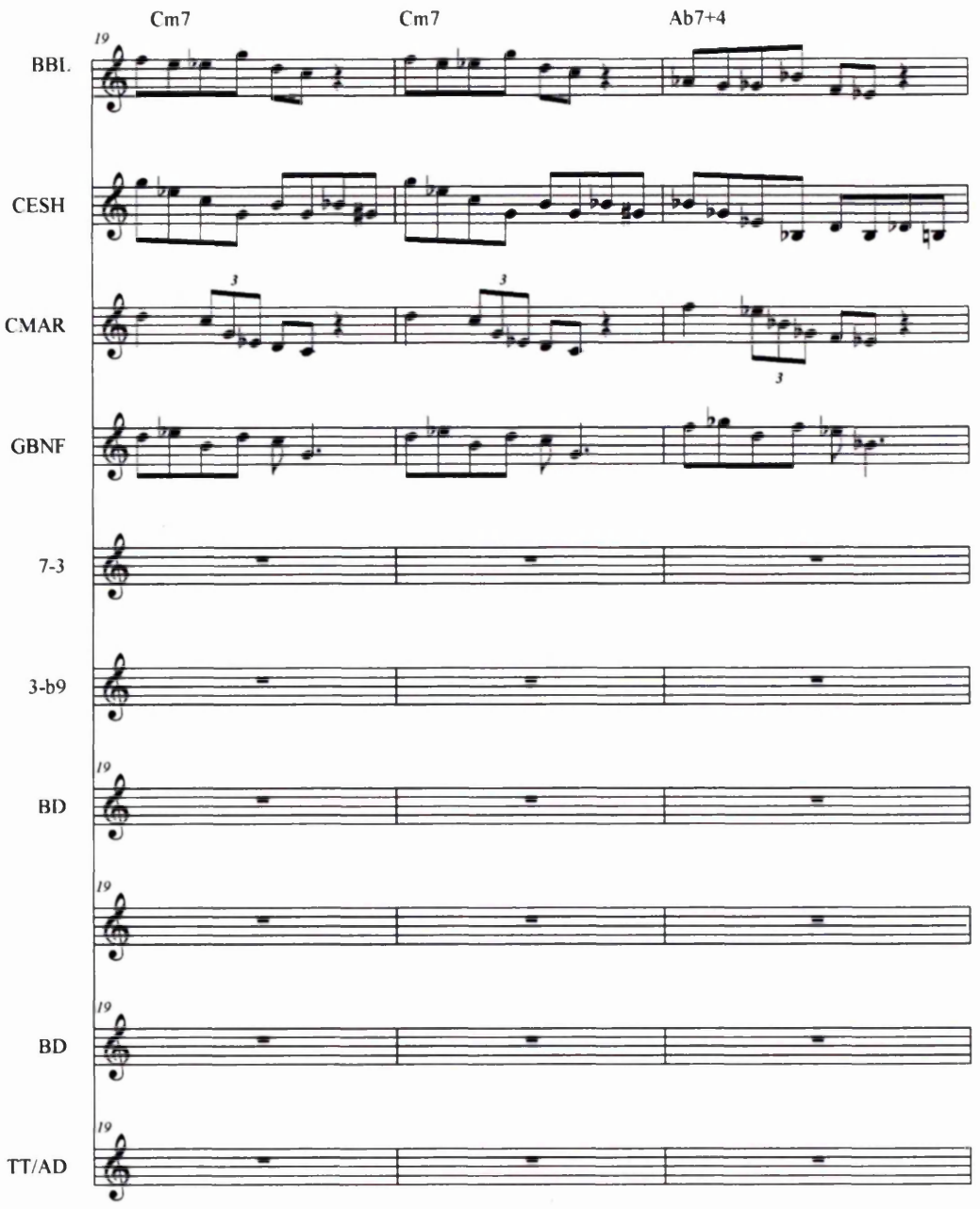

F7
Fm7
Bb13b9
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD

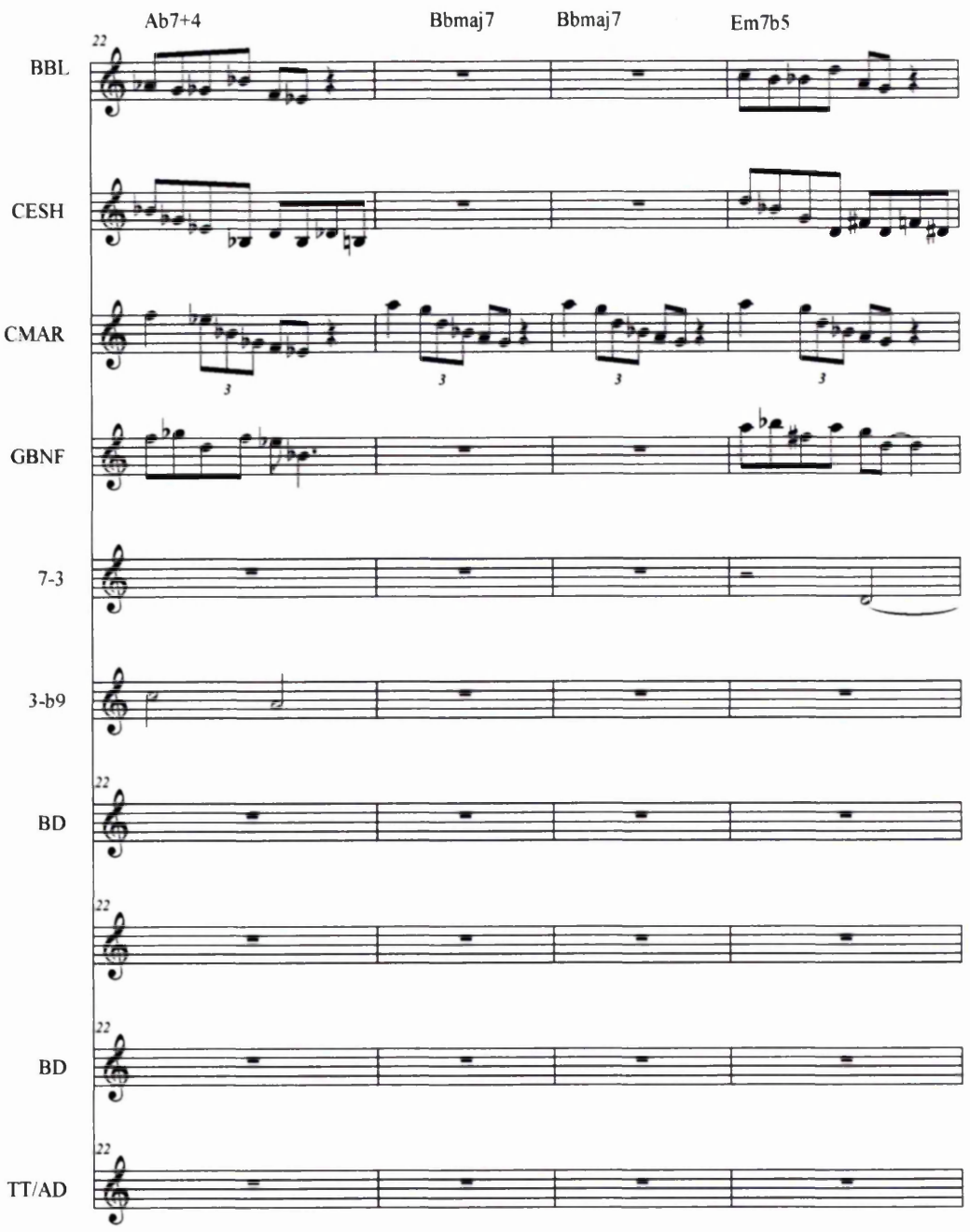

Ebmaj 7
Ab7+4
Bbmaj7
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD

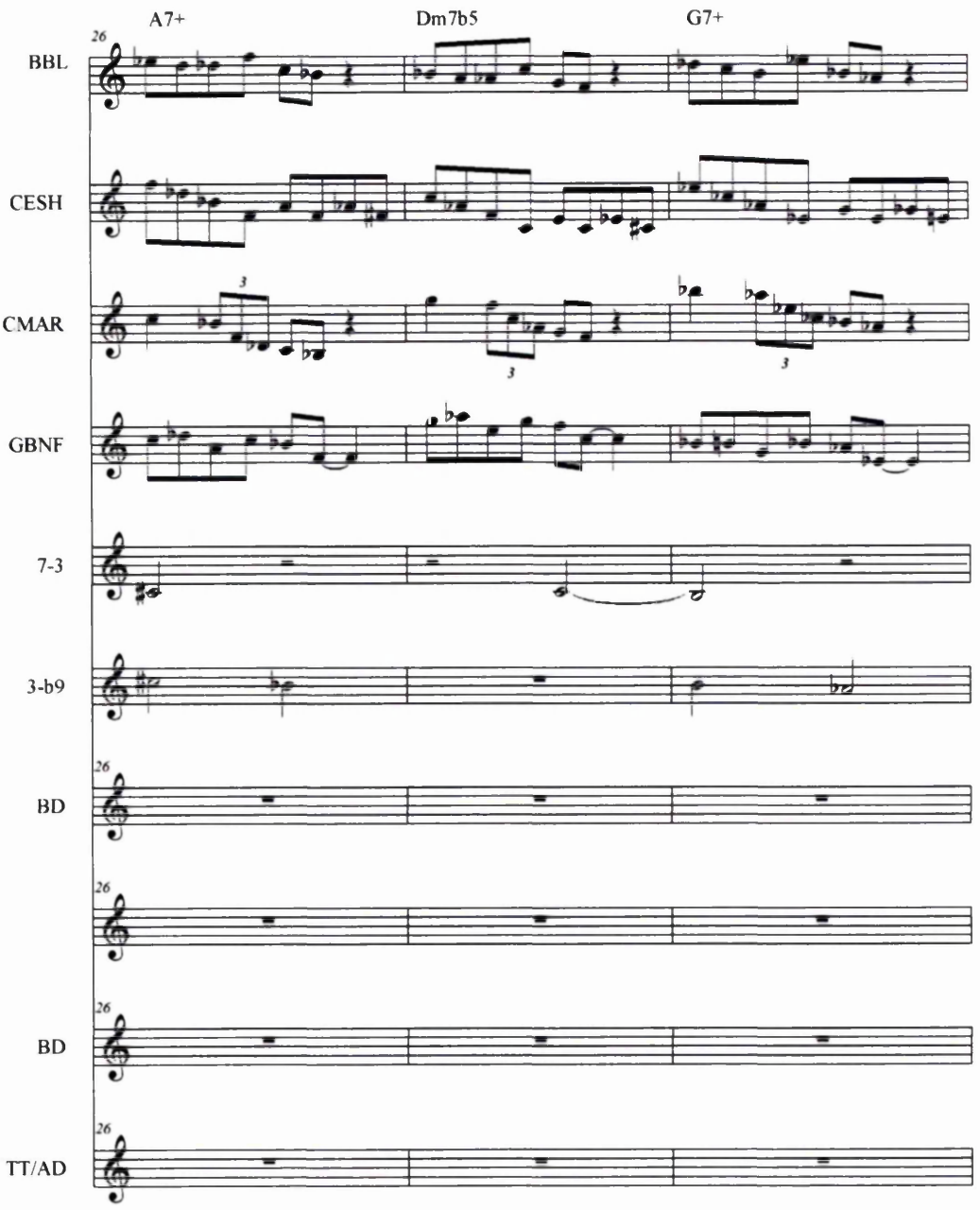

10
Ebm7b5
Dm
Bbm7
Eb7
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD

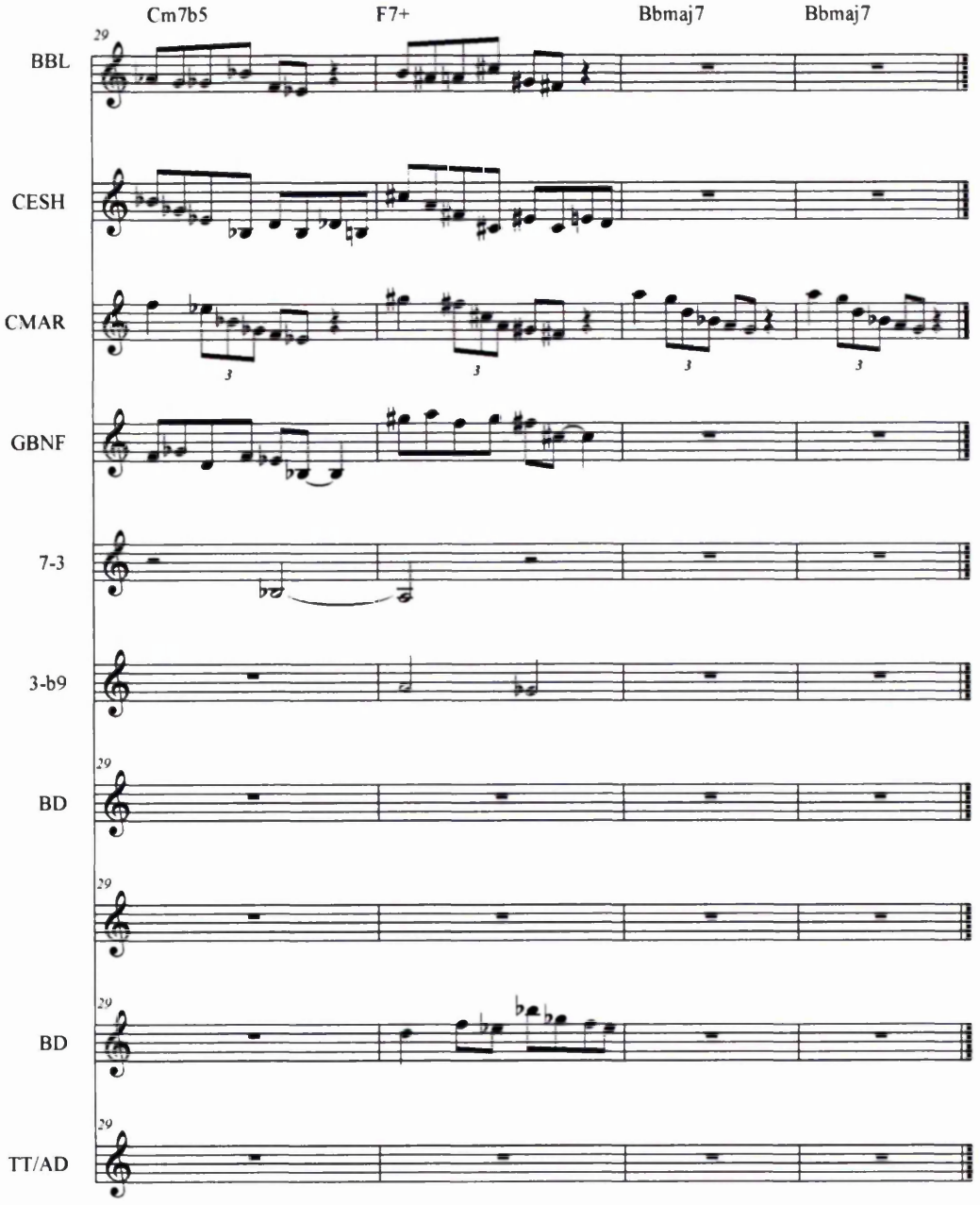

13
Fmaj7
Gm7
Em7b5
Am7b5
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD


D7+
G7+
G7+
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD

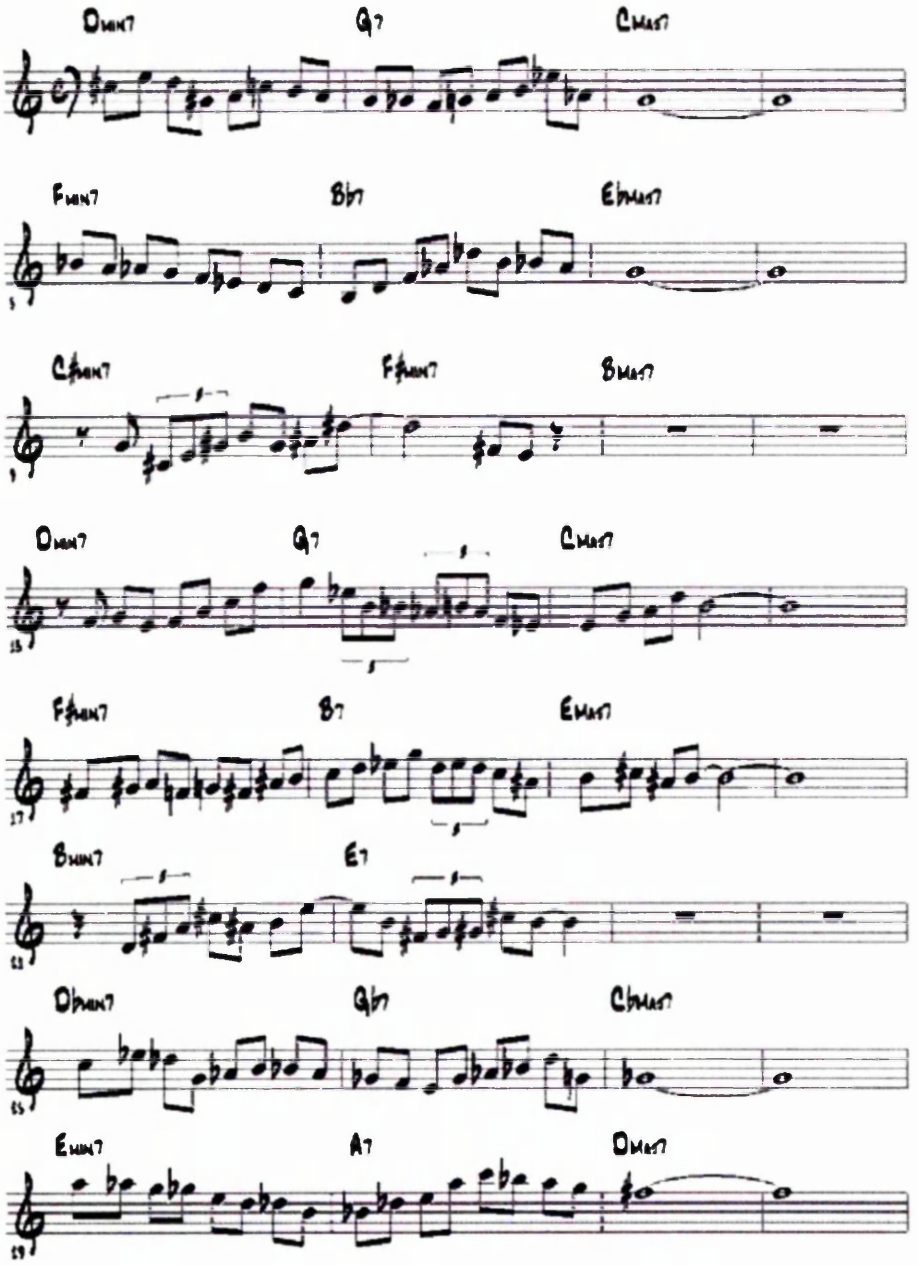

Cm7
Cm7
Ab7+4
19
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD


Ab7+4
Bbmaj7
Bbmaj7
Em7b5
22
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD

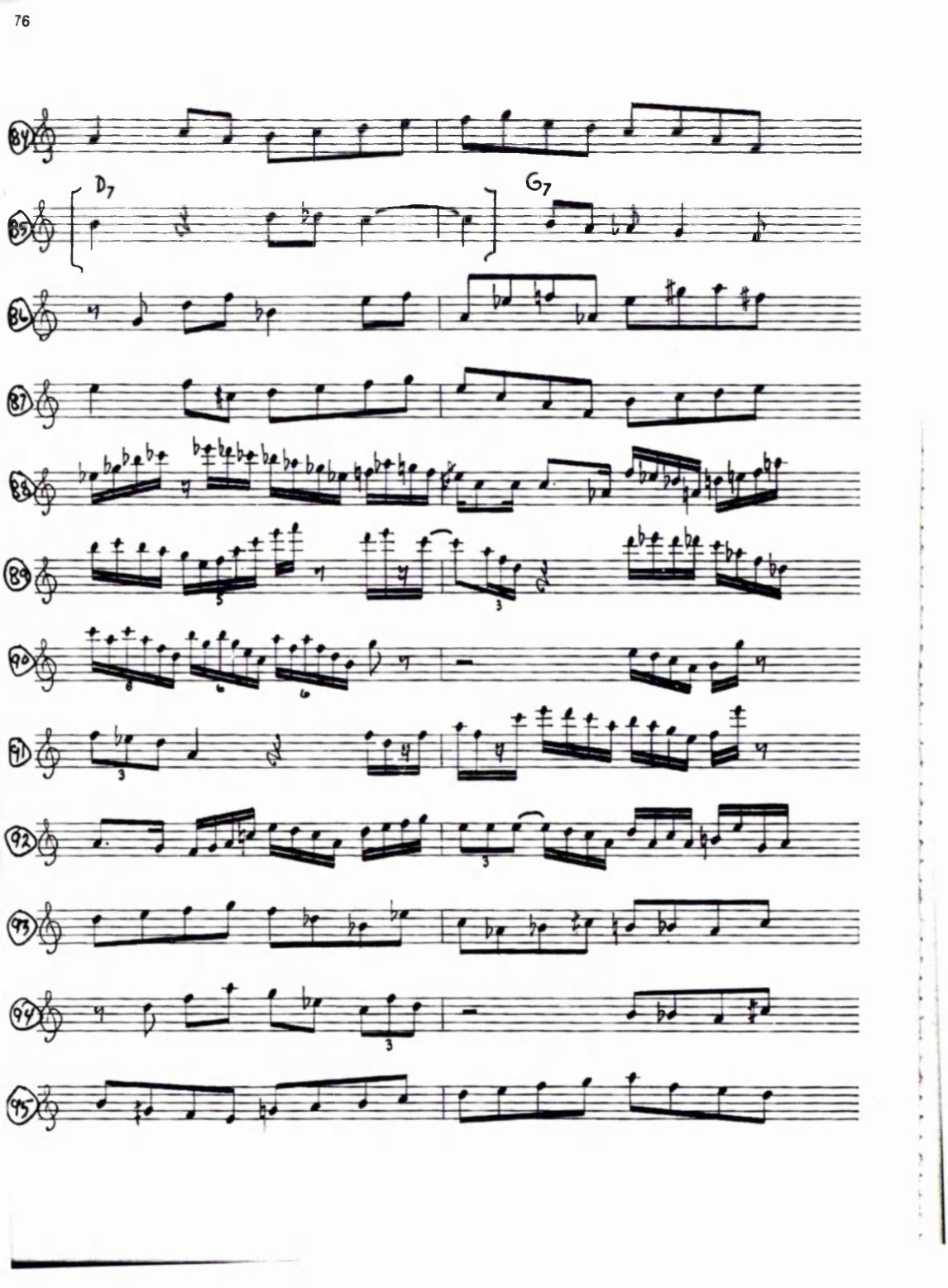

A7+
Dm7b5
G7+
26
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD


Cm7b5
F7+
Bbmaj7
Bbmaj7
BBL
CESH
CMAR
GBNF
7-3
3-b9
BD
BD
TT/AD

1.3 A selection of ii-V-I patterns (Liebman 1991)

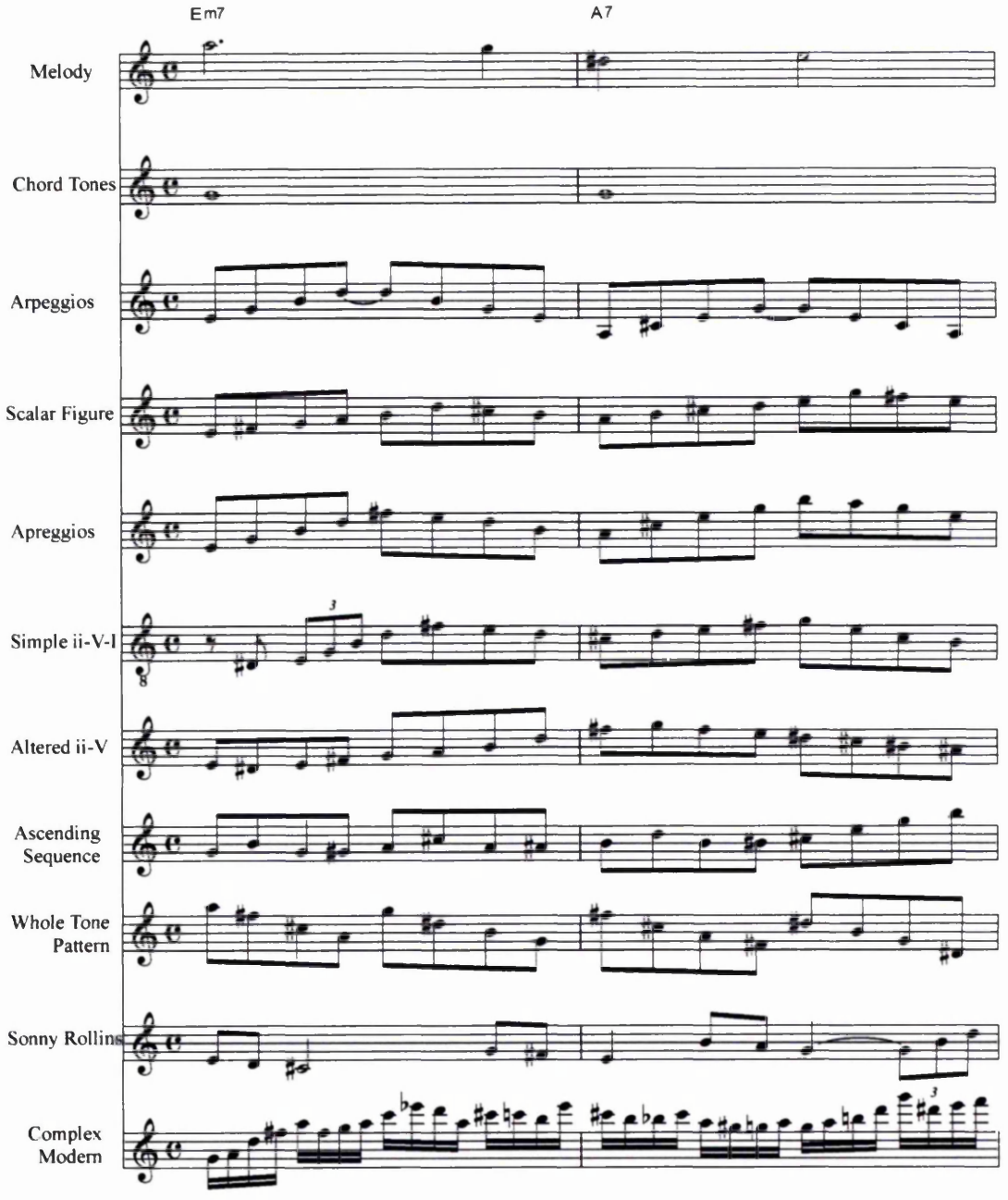


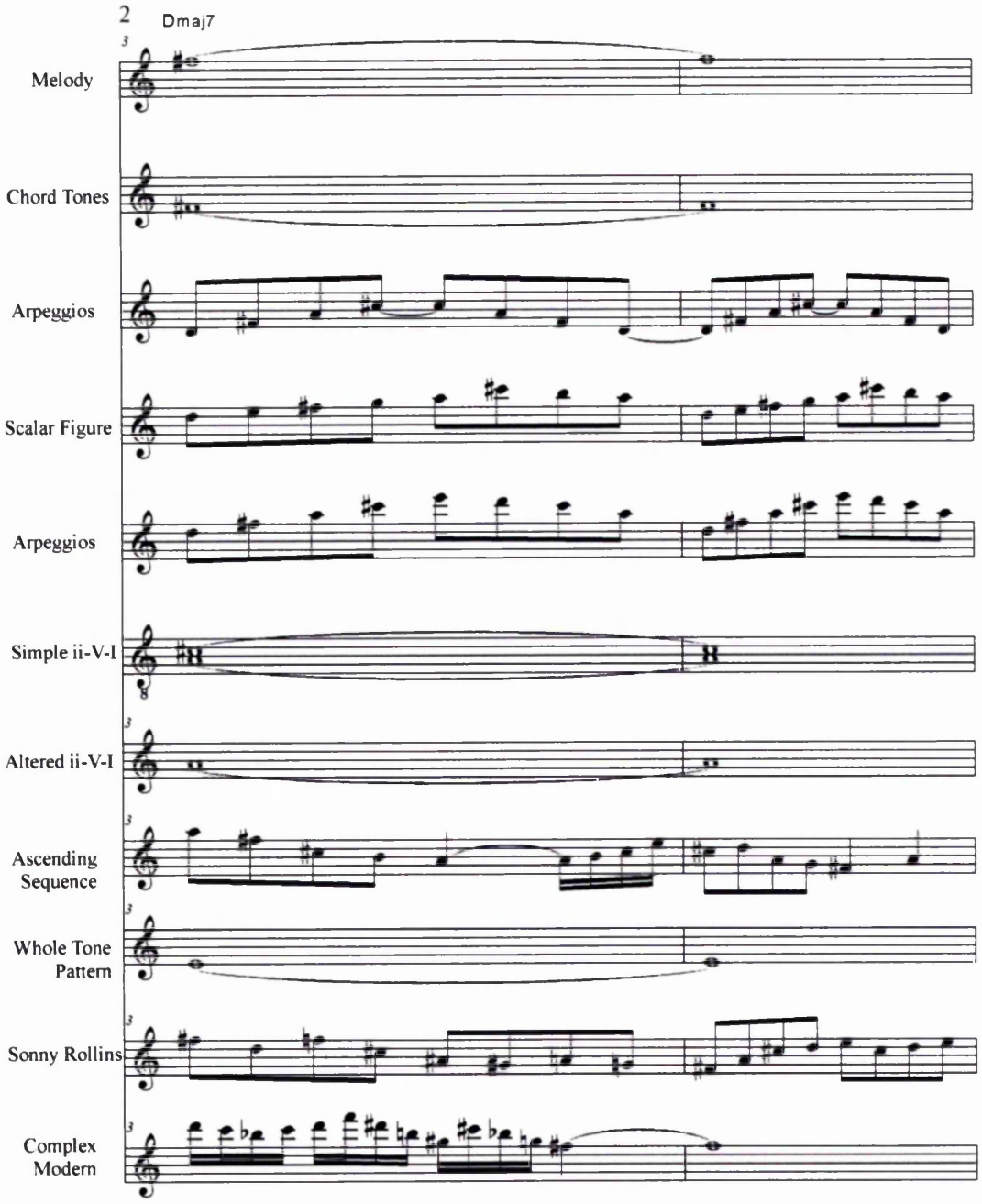
1.4 A selection of ii-V- phrases of John Coltrane (Baker 1980)

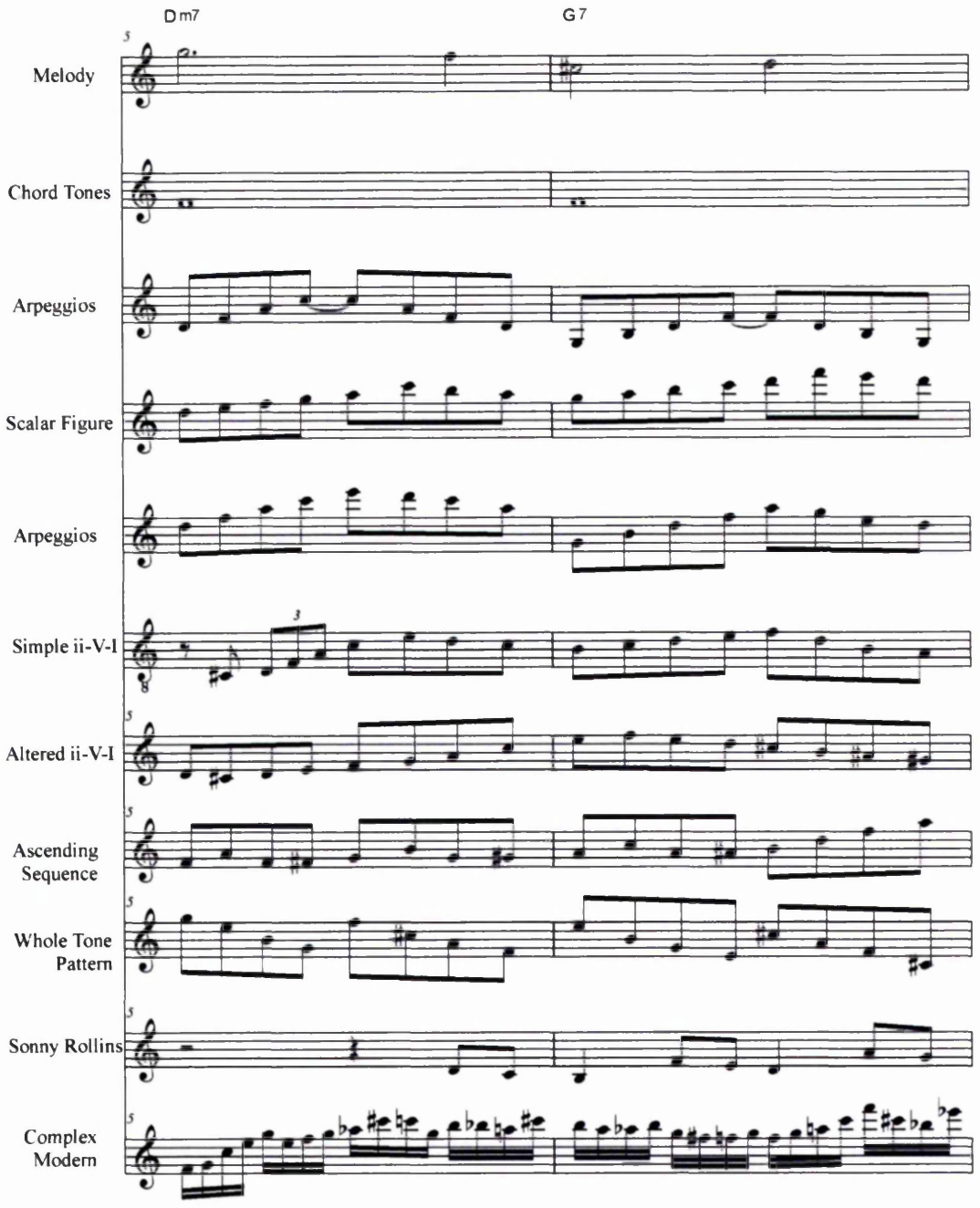


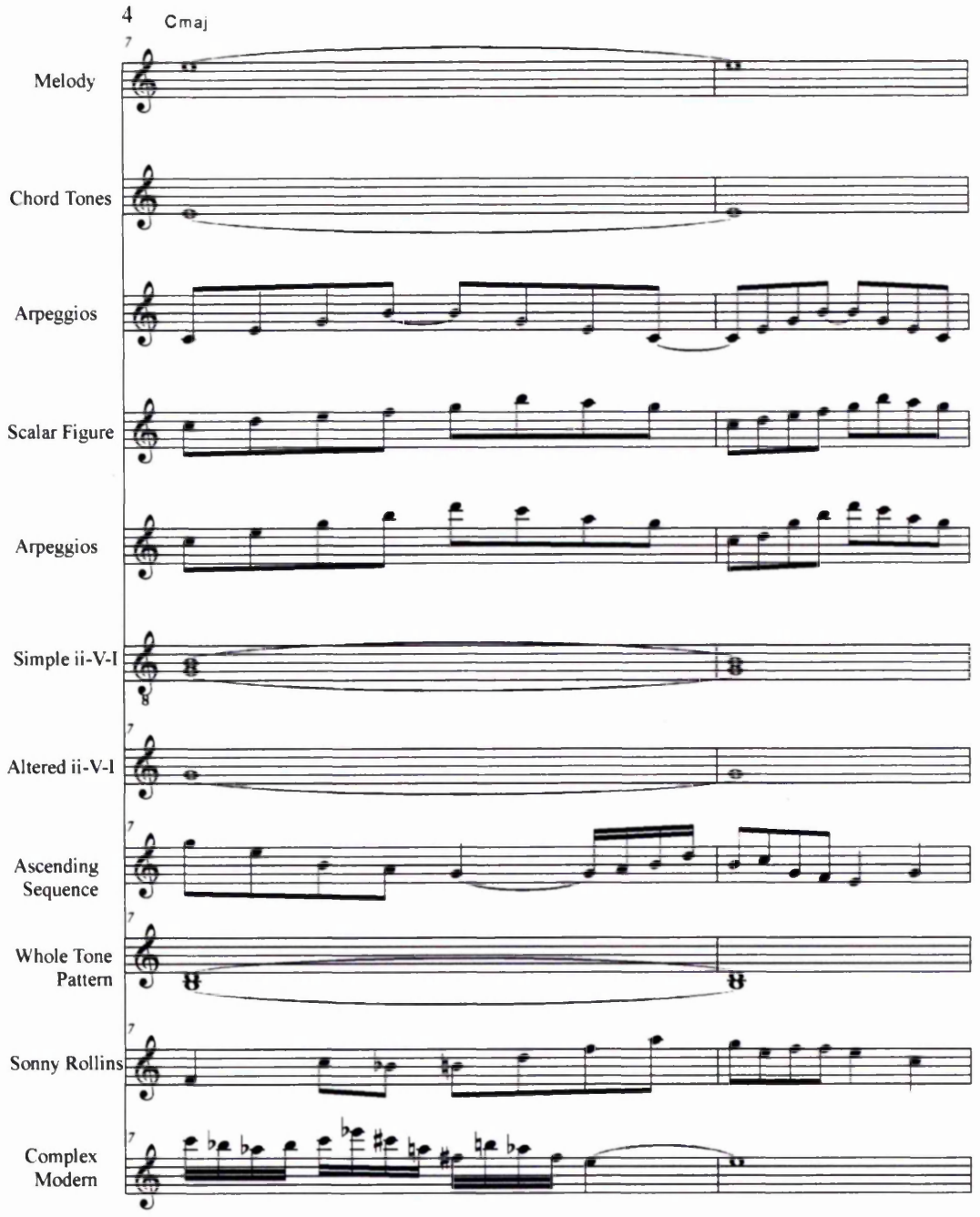
1.5 An illustration of the compositional design of ii-V-I phrases applied to 'Tune Up'

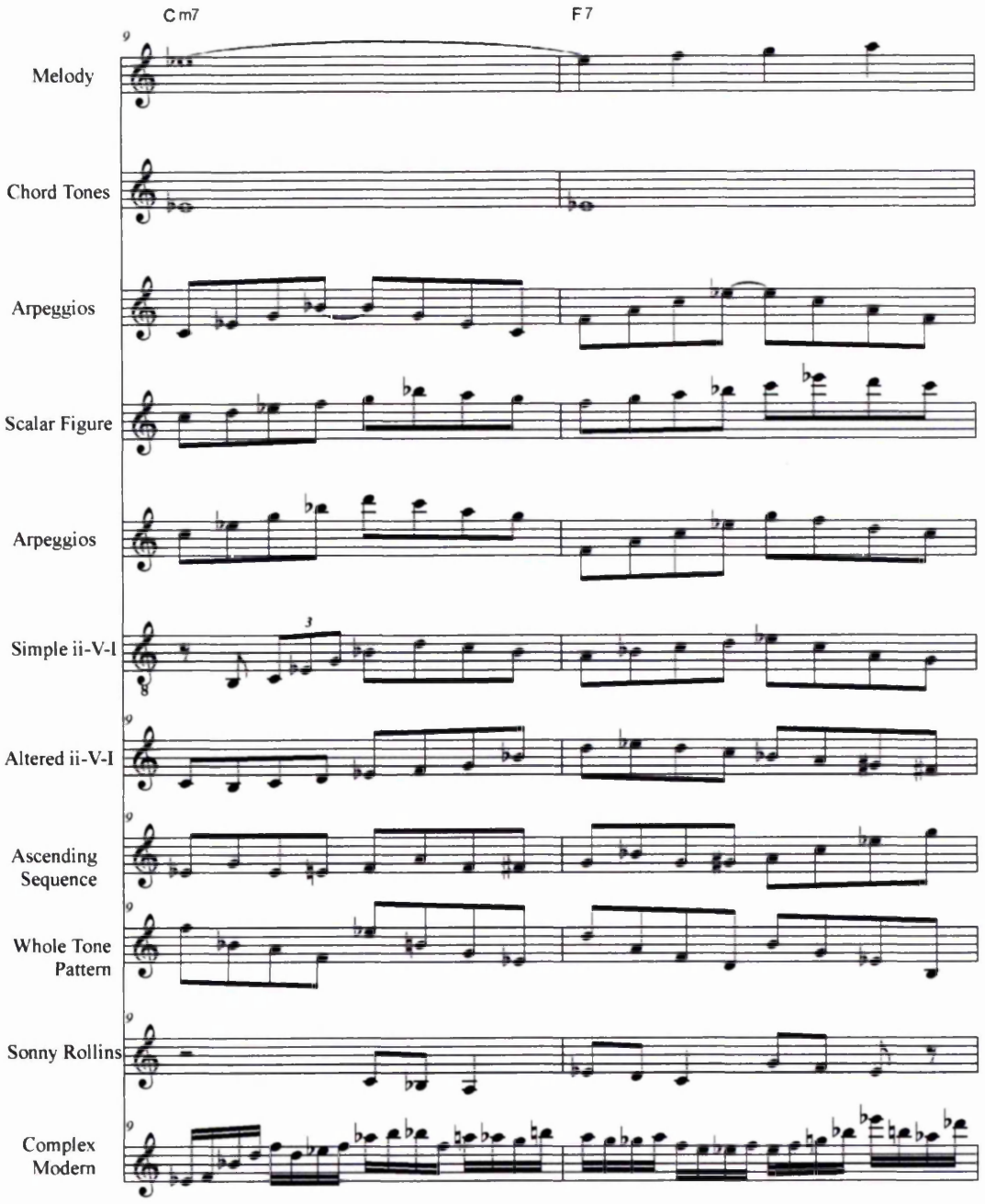
I begin this example with the melody on the first line in order to illustrate a point of departure. Then, on the next line, I move on the major chord tones, then to arpeggios and finally to a series of 'pre-composed' ii-V-I phrases that have become part of the common vocabulary. The final two lines depart from this model: one derives from the opening bars of Sonny Rollins' own solo over this progression recorded on his Blue Note album *Newk's Time* (1957) with Wynton Kelly on piano, Doug Watkins on bass and Philly Joe Jones at the drums; the other is a modern sounding chromatic and half-diminished based phrase that is characteristic of a number of modern saxophone players. I picked this phrase up during my time in Los Angeles and it has a sound reminiscent of Chris Potter and Michael Brecker. The dense chromaticism and technically demanding articulation represents the other extreme to the simple chord tone approach and illustrates the ways in which a formal, structural approach underlies all successful improvisation.

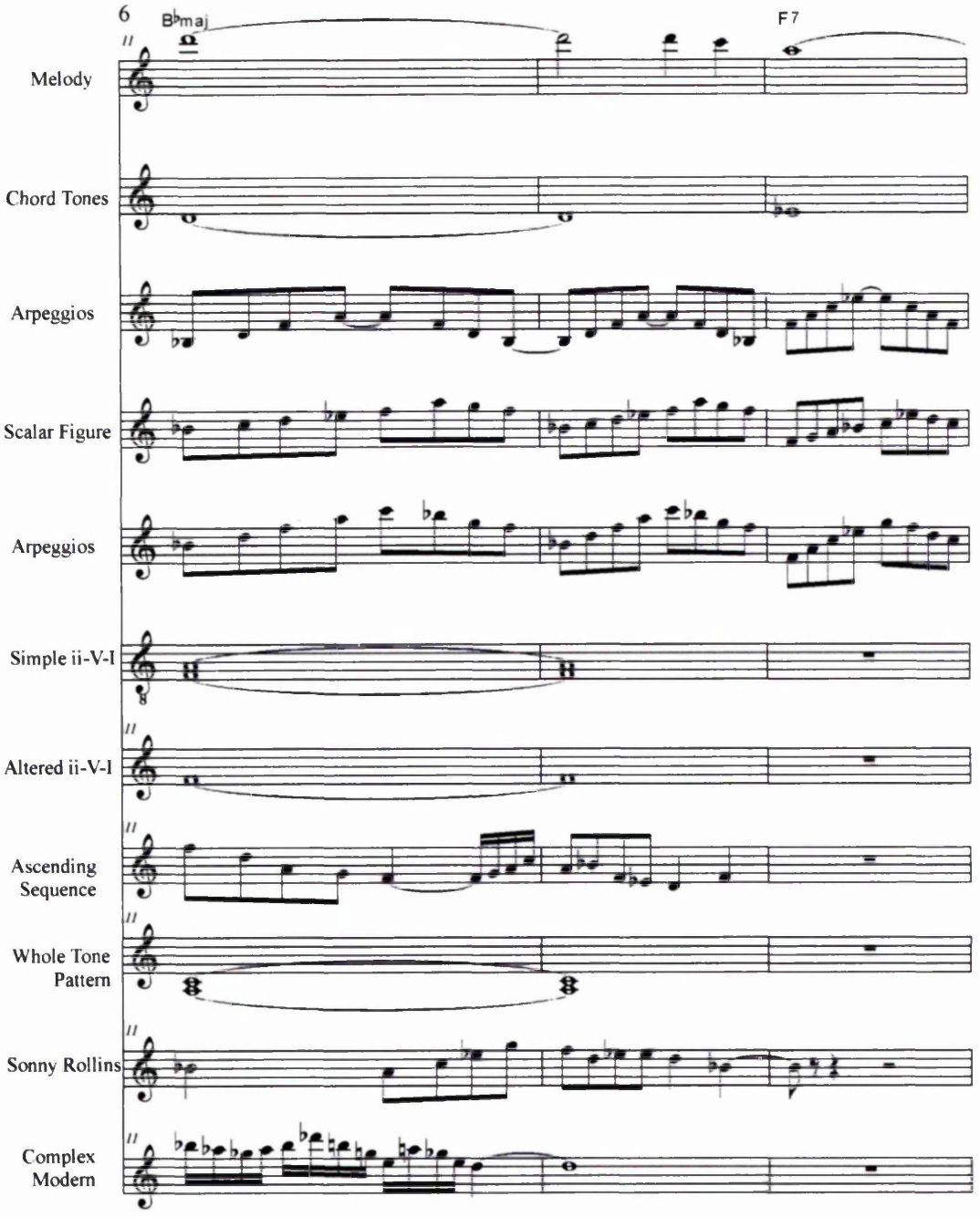

Em7
A7
Melody
Chord Tones
Arpeggios
Scalar Figure
Apreggios
Simple ii-V-I
Altered ii-V
Ascending Sequence
Whole Tone Pattern
Sonny Rollins
Complex Modern

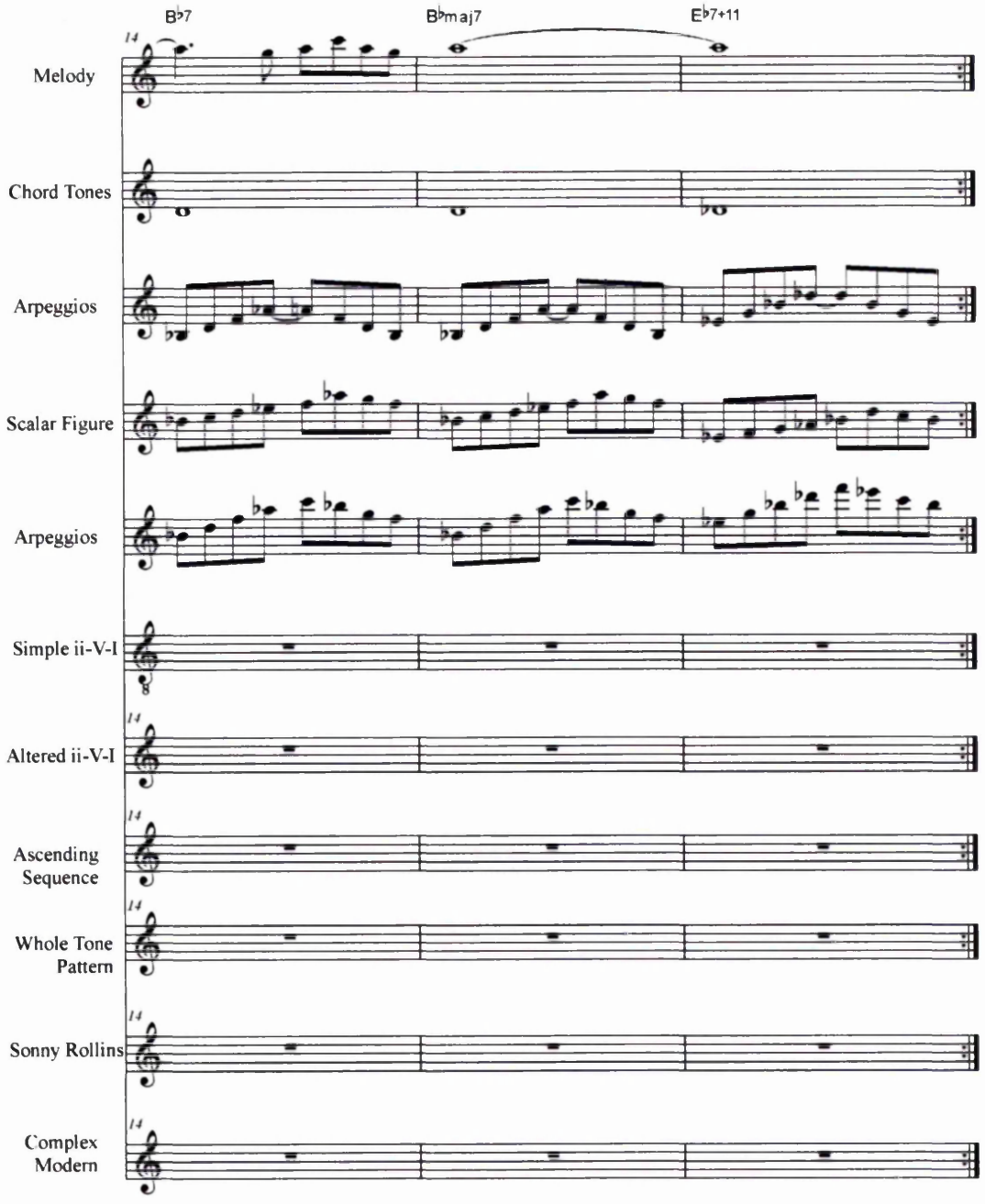

2
Dmaj7
Melody
Chord Tones
Arpeggios
Scalar Figure
Arpeggios
Simple ii-V-I
Altered ii-V-I
Ascending Sequence
Whole Tone Pattern
Sonny Rollins
Complex Modern


Dm7
G7
Melody
Chord Tones
Arpeggios
Scalar Figure
Arpeggios
Simple ii-V-I
Altered ii-V-I
Ascending Sequence
Whole Tone Pattern
Sonny Rollins
Complex Modern

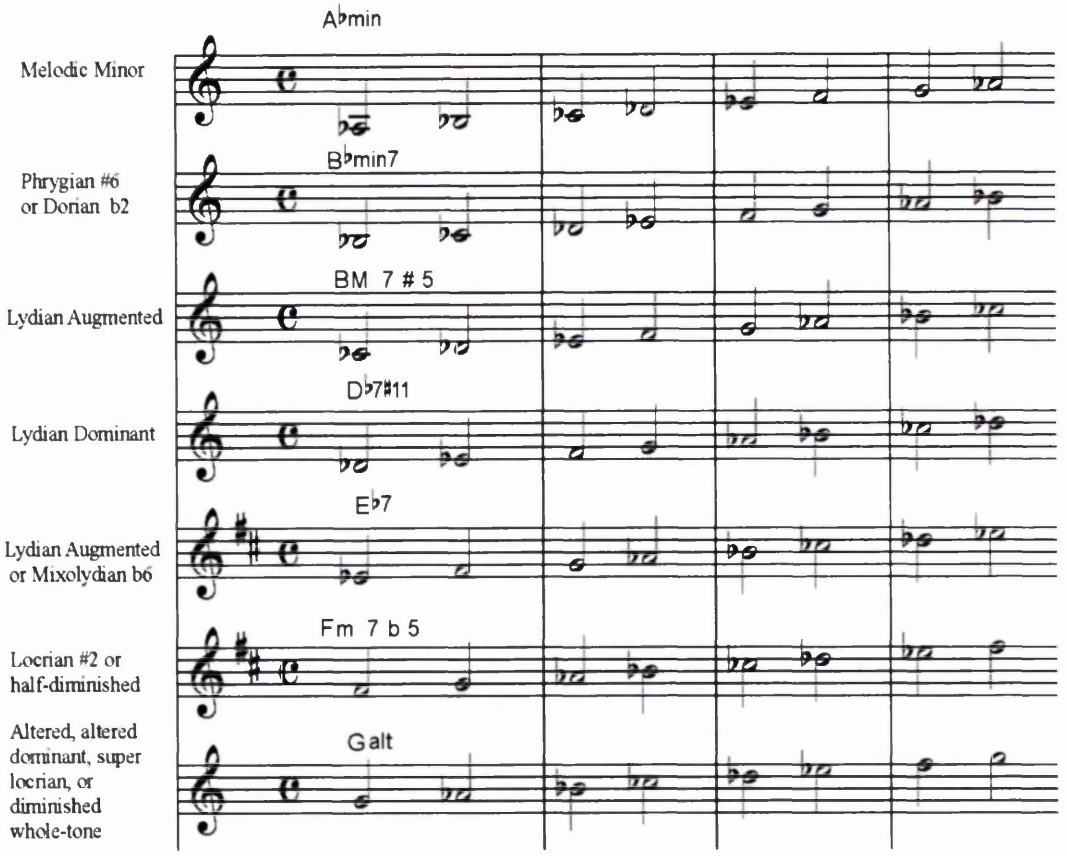

4
Cmaj
Melody
Chord Tones
Arpeggios
Scalar Figure
Arpeggios
Simple ii-V-I
Altered ii-V-I
Ascending Sequence
Whole Tone Pattern
Sonny Rollins
Complex Modern


Cm7
F7
Melody
Chord Tones
Arpeggios
Scalar Figure
Arpeggios
Simple ii-V-I
Altered ii-V-I
Ascending Sequence
Whole Tone Pattern
Sonny Rollins
Complex Modern


6
B♭maj
F7
Melody
Chord Tones
Arpeggios
Scalar Figure
Arpeggios
Simple ii-V-I
Altered ii-V-I
Ascending Sequence
Whole Tone Pattern
Sonny Rollins
Complex Modern


B♭7
B♭maj7
E♭7+11
Melody
Chord Tones
Arpeggios
Scalar Figure
Arpeggios
Simple ii-V-I
Altered ii-V-I
Ascending Sequence
Whole Tone Pattern
Sonny Rollins
Complex Modern

1.6 The melodic minor scale and its related modes



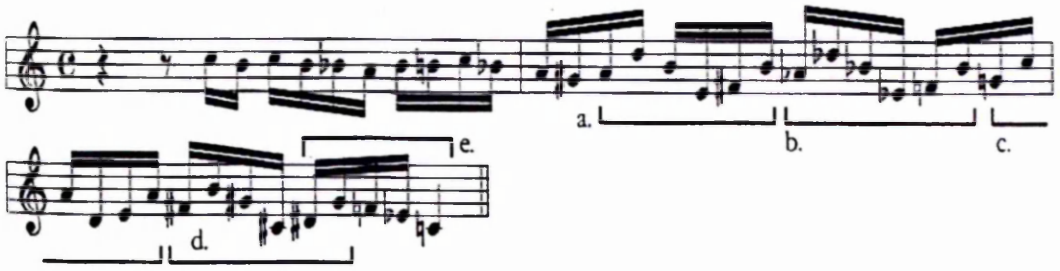
Tabulated version:

Mode name:	Melodic minor	Dorian ♭2; Phrygian ♭6	Lydian augmented	Lydian dominant	Lydian augmented; Mixolydian ♭6	Locrian ♯2; half-diminished	Altered; altered dominant; super-Locrian; diminished whole tone
	A♭/G♯	B♭/A♯	C♭/B	D♭/C♯	E♭/D♯	F	G
	E♭/D♯	F	G♭/F♯	A♭/G♯	B♭/A♯	C	D
	B♭/A♯	C	D♭/C♯	E♭/D♯	F	G	A
	F	G	A♭/G♯	B♭/A♯	C	D	E
	C	D	E♭/D♯	F	G	A	B
	G	A	B♭/A♯	C	D	E	F♯/G♭
	D	E	F	G	A	B	C♯/D♭
	A	B	C	D	E	F♯/G♭	G♯/A♭
	E	F♯/G♭	G	A	B	C♯/D♭	D♯/E♭
	B	C♯/D♭	D	E	F♯/G♭	G♯/A♭	A♯/B♭
	F♯/G♭	G♯/A♭	A	B	C♯/D♭	D♯/E♭	E♯/F
	C♯/D♭	D♯/E♭	E	F♯/G♭	G♯/A♭	A♯/B♭	B♯/C
Chord symbol:	**m/maj7**	**m7**	**maj7(♯5)**	**7**	**7**	**m7(♭5)**	**7alt**

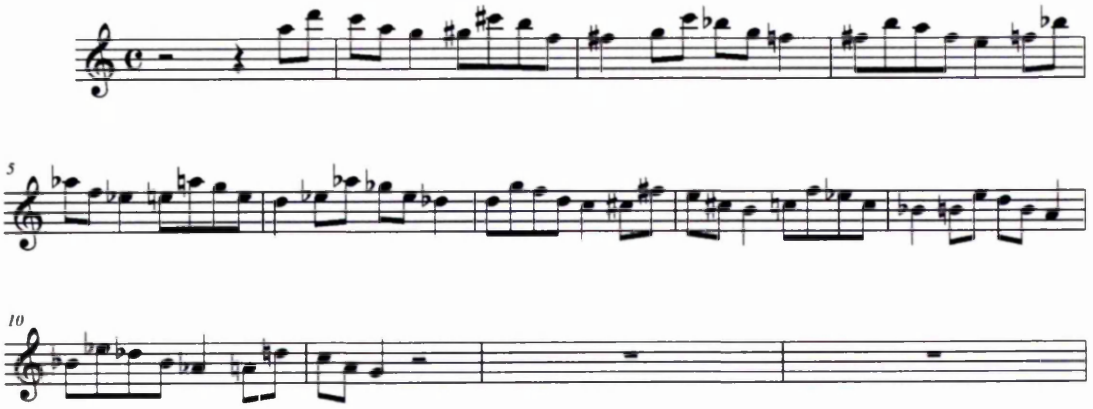
1.7 Examples of pentatonics

Below are two examples of pentatonics. The first is from Michael Brecker, in which he chromatically sequences a six-note pentatonic scale pattern (Ligon 2001: 401).

17.23 Chromatically sequenced pentatonic scale patterns

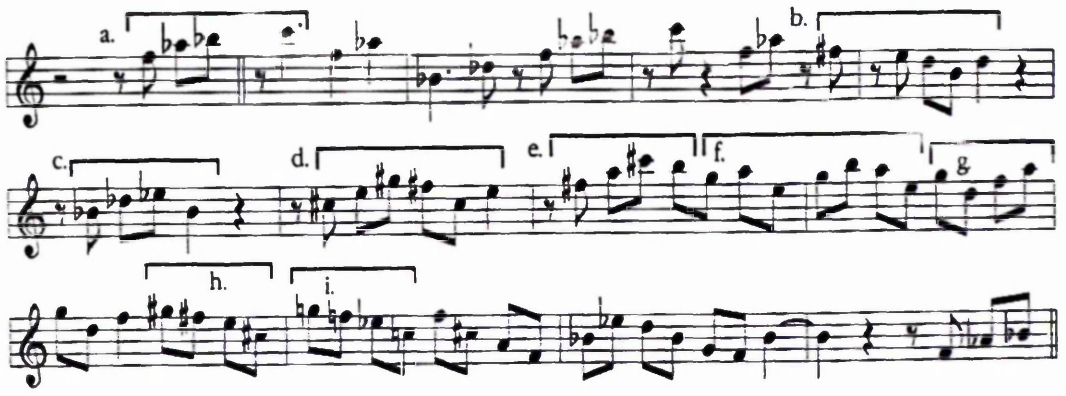


The second is a generic form often used over static harmony or modal progressions:



Below is an example of McCoy Tyner developing pentatonic motives over the blues. Some annotated commentary in the extract suggests that Tyner was not thinking about a harmonic framework; rather, he was developing sequences and transposing them onto different harmonic planes (Ligon 2001: 400). This moves us beyond simply altering chords according to their harmonic extension, to a free concept of tonality which is nonetheless organised sequentially.

17.19 B♭ Blues excerpt



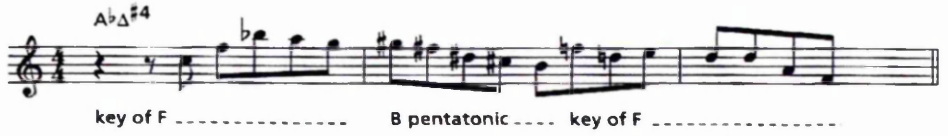
Each minor pentatonic phrase is labelled with a letter: 'a.' derives from the F minor pentatonic, 'b.' derives from a B minor pentatonic (tritone away from F), 'c.' is from B♭m (semitone away from B), 'd.' is from C♯ minor, 'e.' is from E minor, 'f.' is from D minor, 'g.' is from C♯m, 'h.' is from C♯m. These chords bear no conceivable relationship to the underlying harmonic progression of the blues.

Kenny Garrett, an exemplar of 'post-bop' saxophone playing and one of the most emulated musicians of his generation, often cites Woody Shaw as one of his main influences. Shaw developed a vocabulary that often juxtaposed different pentatonic scales to create an outside sound. These examples, from a chapter entitled 'Playing "Outside"' from Mark Levine's *The Jazz Theory Book* (1995: 189), exemplify this approach.

Playing Scales to Get Outside

Playing a scale can clearly outline a tonality other than the written one. Woody Shaw was a master at playing scales that "don't belong" to the written chord. Look at **figure 8-10**, from Woody's solo on his tune "In Case You Haven't Heard."[8] His first five notes suggest the key of F. Next Woody plays a B pentatonic scale,[9] suggesting the key of B, a tritone away from F. He then clearly outlines F major again. Woody creates a very clear harmonic structure (the keys of F, B, F) apart from the written chord symbol ($A\flat\Delta^{\sharp 4}$).

Figure 8-10



A few bars later in the same solo, Woody creates a similar effect, as shown in **figure 8-11**. Over an $F\Delta^{\sharp 4}$ chord, he first suggests the key of F, then plays an E pentatonic scale, a half step away, and finally returns to F. *Inside-outside-inside.*

Figure 8-11

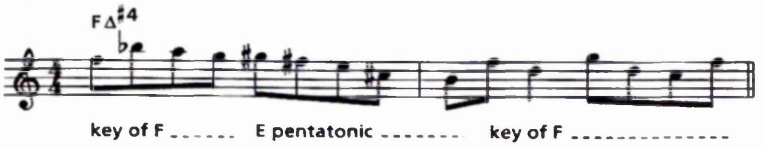


Figure 8-12 shows Woody playing notes from an F bebop dominant scale, followed by two four-note figures suggesting the keys of A♭, and A, all over a C-7 chord on his tune "Rahsaan's Run."[10]

Figure 8-12

[8] Woody Shaw, *Little Red's Fantasy*, Muse, 1976.
[9] Pentatonic scales will be covered in the next chapter.
[10] Woody Shaw, *Rosewood*, Columbia, 1977.

1.8 *The Scale Syllabus* (Aebersold 1991: vii)

SCALE SYLLABUS

LEGEND: H = Half Step, W = Whole Step.; Δ = Major 7th; + or # = raise H; b or - = lower H; ø = Half-diminished; -3 = 3H (Minor Third)

CHORD/SCALE SYMBOL	SCALE NAME	WHOLE & HALF STEP CONSTRUCTION	SCALE IN KEY OF C	BASIC CHORD IN KEY OF C
C	Major	W W H W W W H	C D E F G A B C	C E G B D
C7 (FIVE BASIC CATEGORIES)	Dominant 7th (Mixolydian)	W W H W W H W	C D E F G A Bb C	C E G Bb D
C-	Minor (Dorian)	W H W W W H W	C D Eb F G A Bb C	C Eb G Bb D
Cø	Half Diminished (Locrian)	H W W H W W W	C Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C	C Eb Gb Bb
C°	Diminished (8 tone scale)	W H W H W H W H	C D Eb F Gb Ab A B C	C Eb Gb A (Bbb)
1. MAJOR SCALE CHOICES	**SCALE NAME**	**W & H CONSTRUCTION**	**SCALE IN KEY OF C**	**BASIC CHORD IN KEY OF C**
CΔ (Can be written C)	Major (don't emphasize the 4th)	W W H W W W H	C D E F G A B C	C E G B D
C	Major Pentatonic	W W -3 W -3	C D E G A C	C E G B
CΔ+4	Lydian (major scale with +4)	W W W H W W H	C D E F# G A B C	C E G B D
CΔ	Bebop (Major)	W W H W H H W H	C D E F G G# A B C	C E G B D
CΔb6	Harmonic Major	W W H W H -3 H	C D E F G Ab B C	C E G B D
CΔ+5, +4	Lydian Augmented	W W W W H W H	C D E F# G# A B C	C E G# B D
C	Augmented	-3 H -3 H -3 H	C D# E G Ab B C	C E G B D
C	6th Mode of Harmonic Minor	-3 H W H W W H	C D# E F# G A B C	C E G B D
C	Diminished (begin with H step)	H W H W H W H W	C Db D# E F# G A Bb C	C E G B D
C	Blues Scale	-3 W H H -3 W	C Eb F F# G Bb C	C E G B D
2. DOMINANT 7th SCALE CHOICES	**SCALE NAME**	**W & H CONSTRUCTION**	**SCALE IN KEY OF C**	**BASIC CHORD IN KEY OF C**
C7	Dominant 7th	W W H W W H W	C D E F G A Bb C	C E G Bb D
C7	Major Pentatonic	W W -3 W -3	C D E G A C	C E G Bb D
C7	Bebop (Dominant)	W W H W W H H H	C D E F G A Bb B C	C E G Bb D
C7b9	Spanish or Jewish scale	H -3 H W H W W	C Db E F G Ab Bb C	C E G Bb (Db)
C7+4	Lydian Dominant	W W W H W H W	C D E F# G A Bb C	C E G Bb D
C7b6	Hindu	W W H W H W W	C D E F G Ab Bb C	C E G Bb D
C7+ (has #4 & #5)	Whole Tone (6 tone scale)	W W W W W W	C D E F# G# Bb C	C E G# Bb D
C7b9 (also has #9 & #4)	Diminished (begin with H step)	H W H W H W H W	C Db D# E F# G A Bb C	C E G Bb Db (D#)
C7+9 (also has b9, #4, #5)	Diminished Whole Tone	H W H W W W W	C Db D# E F# G# Bb C	C E G# Bb D# (Db)
C7	Blues Scale	-3 W H H -3 W	C Eb F F# G Bb C	C E G Bb D (D#)
DOMINANT 7th SUSPENDED 4th				
C7 sus 4 (MAY BE WRITTEN G-/C)	Dom. 7th scale but don't emphasize the third	W W H W W H W	C D E F G A Bb C	C F G Bb D
C7 sus 4	Major Pentatonic built on b7	W W -3 W -3	Bb C D F G Bb	C F G Bb D
C7 sus 4	Bebop Scale	W W H W W H H H	C D E F G A Bb B C	C F G Bb D
3. MINOR SCALE CHOICES*	**SCALE NAME**	**W & H CONSTRUCTION**	**SCALE IN KEY OF C**	**BASIC CHORD IN KEY OF C**
C- or C-7	Minor (Dorian)	W H W W W H W	C D Eb F G A Bb C	C Eb G Bb D
C- or C-7	Pentatonic (Minor Pentatonic)	-3 W W -3 W	C Eb F G Bb C	C Eb G Bb D
C- or C-7	Bebop (Minor)	W H H H W W H W	C D Eb E F G A Bb C	C Eb G Bb D
C-Δ (maj. 7th)	Melodic Minor (ascending)	W H W W W W H	C D Eb F G A B C	C Eb G B D
C- or C-6 or C-	Bebop Minor No. 2	W H W W H H W H	C D Eb F G G# A B C	C Eb G B D
C- or C-7	Blues Scale	-3 W H H -3 W	C Eb F F# G Bb C	C Eb G Bb D
C-Δ (b6 & maj. 7th)	Harmonic Minor	W H W W H -3 H	C D Eb F G Ab B C	C Eb G B D
C- or C-7	Diminished (begin with W step)	W H W H W H W H	C D Eb F F# G# A B C	C Eb G B D
C- or C-b9b6	Phrygian	H W W W H W W	C Db Eb F G Ab Bb C	C Eb G Bb
C- or C-b6	Pure or Natural Minor, Aeolian	W H W W H W W	C D Eb F G Ab Bb C	C Eb G Bb D
4. HALF DIMINISHED SCALE CHOICES	**SCALE NAME**	**W & H CONSTRUCTION**	**SCALE IN KEY OF C**	**BASIC CHORD IN KEY OF C**
Cø	Half Diminished (Locrian)	H W W H W W W	C Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C	C Eb Gb Bb
Cø#2 (Cø9)	Half Diminished #2 (Locrian #2)	W H W H W W W	C D Eb F Gb Ab Bb C	C Eb Gb Bb D
Cø (with or without #2)	Bebop Scale	H W W H H H W W	C Db Eb F Gb G Ab Bb C	C Eb Gb Bb
5. DIMINISHED SCALE CHOICES	**SCALE NAME**	**W & H CONSTRUCTION**	**SCALE IN KEY OF C**	**BASIC CHORD IN KEY OF C**
C°	Diminished (8 tone scale)	W H W H W H W H	C D Eb F Gb Ab A B C	C Eb Gb A

NOTES: 1) The above chord symbol guide is my system of notation. I feel it best represents the sounds I hear in jazz. The player should be aware that each chord symbol represents a series of tones called a scale. **2)** Even though a C7+9 would appear to have only a raised 9th, it also has a b9, +4 and +5. So the entire C7+9 scale would look like: Root, b9, +9, 3rd, +4, +5, b7 & root (C, Db, D#, E, F#, G#, Bb, C). My chord symbol C7+9 is therefore an abbreviation, while the complete name of this scale is Diminished Whole Tone (sometimes called Super Locrian or Altered Scale). Similarly, C7b9 also appears to have only one altered tone (b9) but it actually has three: b9, +9 and +4. The entire scale looks like this: Root, b9, +9, 3rd, +4, 5th, 6th, b7 & root (C, Db, D#, E, F#, G, A, Bb, C). This is called a Diminished scale and my chord symbol abbreviation is C7b9. **3)** All scales under the Dominant 7th category are scales that embellish the basic Dominant 7th sound. Some scales provide much more tension than the basic dominant 7th sound and require practice and patience to grasp the essence of their meaning. I encourage you to work with the first side of Volume 3 "The 11-V7-1 Progression" since it emphasizes Diminished and Diminished Whole Tone scales and chords. **4)** * - In category #3, MINOR SCALE CHOICES, the PURE MINOR scale choice is not used very often. I have found the order of preference to be Dorian, Bebop, Melodic, Blues, Pentatonic, and then any of the remaining Minor scale choices.

1.9 Excerpt from Jason Goldman interview, 10 December 2002: USC Thornton School of Music, Los Angeles, CA

I: When you enter into this world of jazz, what are your first impressions? What are the sounds, what do they mean to you, how do you relate to them?

J: Wow! Um, well I would say, I mean usually most people who enter kind of the world of jazz get a little bit, er scared, initially, um, and...you can stop me and direct me back if I kind of steer off track a little bit, but (I: Right)...this helicopter's no help either but, um...they get initially scared because jazz...We had a problem because jazz was the popular music back in the 30s and the 20s and now it's kinda become this thing that's really not taught that much in the elementary and middle schools and um, now we're just starting to implement programs to do this kind of study where it's part of the curriculum now in history classes to discuss jazz, um, and they have like, I know a couple of organisations who are starting to implement them in the public schools now which in turn will help um, um people who are just starting to listen to jazz not be so afraid of hearing the sounds or be so turned off by it because it doesn't have a back beat to it. So, um, I think that's one of the things that's really scares people, its kinda hard to...to hear some of these sounds that are coming out you know. (I: Right) When I usually start to get people intro, er introduced to jazz, or if its someone whose not a musician I'll say, OK, well, you know let me show you something that's easy listening, easy...I wouldn't say easy listening, but ahh, easier to listen to jazzwise and I would show them *Kind of Blue* (I: Right) of course 'cause Miles Davis, er, that's one of the best records (I: yeah) and's probably sold the most of any jazz record. So, er, and

usually most people tend to like that record 'cause it's so mellow, and, and eventually if they start to listen to certain things like that, they'll begin to go, 'OK, well I like Miles, let me see whose in his band and maybe I'll get one of their records', um but it's like, usually people get scared when, you know, you show 'em John Coltrane first and, er, they get freaked out because it's just so much information at one time and it doesn't, er, it's, it...we've kinda become, um, a little bit self indulgent a little bit as jazz musicians, as we, kind of um, we don't, we've kind of lost the idea of really playing for an audience as much as for ourselves and our musician friends (I: Right) which is, you know, which, which hopefully will start to come back a little, I can, I can see it.

I: Do you think that's just because it's not out there in the public, its become more of a sort of, um

J: Well it is there out in the public it's just that, you know artists in general have just, you know become...you know you get two different types of artists really. You get the type that is, um, that is, um, because jazz musicians are entertainers whichever way you look at it we're entertainers (I: Right) but some people prefer, they don't really care that they're only doing stuff for themselves, um they don't really care that the audience thinks about their music, you know, which, it hurts a little bit (I: Right) but at the same time you gotta respect it you know, 'cause that's what they're going for (I: Right). But at the same time, it's like, for me personally, I think I owe it to the audience, they came (I: Sure) out to pay to hear what I'm doing and, er, you know I try to, I try to put on some things that'll be a little easier for the audiences as well

as put in some little more advanced music that'll hopefully get them into that (I: Right) and kind of push that in that direction.

I: Now you, you as a, you as Jason as your life. How did it all start?

J: OK, well I started in middle school, they had a jazz band. I'm from Norwood Connecticut. um, we had a jazz band. When I was in sixth grade I saw the jazz band playing, I was like 'Man! That sounds really cool'. Like all the good musicians were in that band, I was like 'Man, well I wanna be in that band' and then so I was hanging out with one of my friends who was a trumpet player in sixth grade and we were like 'Yeah we wanna make the band, and he showed me this C.D. of the *Tonight Show* band and they recorded a two volume thing which is older traditional big-band music and, er, I just heard these, these saxophones playing these fast notes and the trumpet players playing high notes and I've never heard that played before I and was 'Man! This is like the hippest stuff', this is, I wanna try and get into that band so I can play like that. Um, so I ended up practising a lot so that I could get up to at least make the band and then I did make the band.

I: What did you practice?

J: I would practice, er, I was just practicing scales at the time (I: Right) and practising just reading, you know we, I didn't rally have the kind of er, music education at that point that I wanted to I mean I just started playing when I

was, er, in sixth grade, that was when I first started picking it up and, so, I mean I didn't really start to practice like improvisation, you know I didn't know anything about that I was, I just knew that I could, if I could read the big band music I could probably make the band (I: Right) and so that's what I did, learned how to read pretty well. And I made the band, and er, it was off and running from there and then when I got to high school, er, well before I gotten into high school I saw the high school big band perform at a concert and I was like 'Man! That's even better band' (I: Right) It's like let me see if I can try and make that band, so you know, I started learning, er, I took private lessons and I started learning how to improvise a little bit, and er...You know, and I was...I learned blues scale, (I: Yeah), you know one blues scale and I just heard, you know, from my records I would try to play a couple a things I heard from the record (I: Yep) and um, eventually I got into high school and in my freshman year I made the jazz band there for, on tenor sax for some reason I got lucky, and um, and so, and they were more influenced by some of the guys in the band, like you know more smooth jazz kind of players. So I started getting into that because that, you know that was what my peers were into (I: Uh ha) so I was like 'Man! That's cool'. I mean it was still hip saxophone playing like David Sanborn (I: hmm) it was still a kind of hip smooth jazz player.

I: And this is what, in the eighties?

J: Ahh shit, let me see (laughs). '89 (I: Right). Yeah that was when I was a freshman in high school. Um, and so I did that and eventually as I got older and older in high school and I was in my junior year I started trying to play like er, one of the tenor players in the band, this guy Mark Small (I: Ah yeah, laughs). Er, he started like with, playing bebop more than that (I: Right), I mean he still listened to the stuff we were listening (I: Right) to but he was trying to do like hit more of the changes 'cause we weren't really, we didn't know....I mean I didn't know, like hitting changes (I: Right), I just knew what sounds I could play and I had a good ear so I knew it could carry me through (I: Right) a tune (I: Right). So, err, he started trying to hit the changes more and I was like 'Well maybe I'll try to do that'. So I started practicing like Bird solos (I: mm mm) and I would read through the Omnibook like every day (I: mm mm) and see if I could play some of those licks in my soloing (I: yep, yep).

I: Was it at this point that you began to stand back as ask 'How does it all fit together? What is this music made of?' Or do you still think you were kind of (J: yeahhh) because for me, as soon as bebop came along, I had to *learn* a new vocabulary. It wasn't just about playing what I felt like.

J: Of course, yeah. No, I did too, though I never, in high school I never, I never seriously got into bebop until college like I was still, like I was the best saxophone player in my high school except when Mark, you know was a year ahead of me so, you know we were kind of both there and we were kind of the

both, both one of the you know, two best players that the school, so we would always be playin'. You know, there was a little bit of competition but not much because he was kind of getting into a different thing and I was still doing my you know Hokey smooth jazz kind of thing and er...So and then when I got into freshman year at college and all these other cats, you know they would invite me to jam sessions and I hardly knew any tunes and I, that was when I had to kind of step and go 'hoooh, shit man I need to really start to understand (I: yeah) this' and I'd go see live jazz as (I: mm mm) much as possible and try and understand this and I'd start practising and I'd go to jam sessions and try to copy and emulate what other cats were doing 'cause I thought it was so intriguing that you know you see the better musicians and they start to play stuff and you're like 'Man! That's a lot better than what I'm playing'. I'm playing just easy stuff they're playing like intricate stuff (I: mm mm) and they're, at the time I didn't know what it was called but they were making the changes, you know and I'm like 'Man! What are they doing that I'm not doing?'. So I had to go through that whole process...of...of trying to figure out how to play the music (I: right).

I: How did you go about that?

J: Well, there's progressions that you memorise (I: yeah), like you know two-five-one and all of that kind of thing. I think of it as memory, and it's how you make the changes, you that's what I ended up learning you know, and through college I was, an I was er , I'd say I was intermediate to

intermediate/advanced, I was never like the best in college, or even close to it at that point, I was just...

I: Where was college?

J: Er, Berklee College of Music (I: Right), and I went there as a dual major in jazz composition and film composing. So, er, 'cause at that point when I got in there as a freshman, and even as my first couple of months as a sophomore year I was like 'Man! I don't think I'll be able to make it as a player', 'cause these cats are...you know...are so far ahead of me. I mean what the hell am I going to do to catch up to them? So, it was like at that point that I was like 'Man!'. I always did like to compose for big band, I tried to do my first big band chart and when I was a senior in high school which was horrible, and uhh, I mean you know, but it was the thing...It was the first thing I tried to do so I was like 'All Right well, I'll get it'. So I went to school and I said 'Man! I better try and do this composing arranging thing 'cause I don't know if I can do the playing thing, I'm not good enough'. (I: right) That was the first time in my life I was like 'Man! I don't think I'm good enough to do the playing' 'cause it just seemed like so much work and (I: yeah)...You see when you're like, it's like get to Berklee, it's like, there's like 'Yeah, yeah I practice like six hours today' and I'm like 'Six hours!!'. I never had *that* kind of discipline you know (I: right). I was always doing Marching Band, Concert Band, Pit Orchestra, Jazz...It's like 'Man! I could never practice six hours' lucky if I practice half hour or an hour. (I: Laugh) You know, so through college I still

went to jam sessions even though my major was, er jazz composition and film composing, um and matter of fact the only reason I think I went to film composing, although I did like films and stuff, was that I was kind of scared about the performing thing and (I: sure)...Because I didn't think I could do it at that point. Um..

I: That's something that really interests me...it's that when you're at college, or a place like Berklee, there's a lot of competition and people develop their vocabularies (J: Yeah) so that they can scare the shit out of people (J: Yeah!!).

J: Yeah and it's not just that, you know that now that , you know I'm semi-accomplished in things that I have done already, you know, I'm one of the teachers at this Brubeck Institute summer jazz colony up north with Christian McBride and er, what it is is we get the best 15 high school students from around the country and man, some of these kids are so gifted they practice but they don't even know what they're playing. They just, they can relate to sounds (I: Right, mmm) and that's the thing now that I think back with, that's scary (I: Right) to me like 'cause I didn't hear those sounds like those cats are hearing them (I: Right)

I: So, you think that has something to do with it? (J: Yeahhh!)

J: But the thing is, like it doesn't mean that, that, for example for me it took me a while before I could get to that, like now I could play, like once I go to the end

of my college career I started practising a little bit more but I was still writing mostly...ummm, and I had gotten into some of the best jazz ensembles at the school at that point 'cause my reading was real good and my improvisation was just, OK because I was starting to make changes (I: Right), you know...and then I got out here and I was shedding a lot and I made the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz by some miracle, I still don't even know. And then, it was like that was a dose of reality 'cause Terence Blanchard was our director (I: Right) and all of a sudden I just got my playing together man. I wasn't, I couldn't mess around any more.

I: So, two things I'm interested in here are, like the philosophical thing about relating to sounds and also the idea of getting it together, what...

J: Yeah, umm, well like they, a lot of musicians, like especially young guys, they don't really even know necessarily what they're playing, its like, you know back in the days they didn't have the records to listen to they just, but they had a lot of live jazz to listen to, so they would go there and they would just listen all the time and try to emulate...They would here those sounds so much that they would just kind of come into themselves (I: hmmm) and they would just know 'OK, well over that sound I could play this sound' so and, you know I'm sure that they did know some technical jargon at some point but not nearly to the extent that 'Yeah you could play your symmetrical diminished here' it's like, to them it's a dominant chord (I: Right). You know, the diminished was just a dominant chord. That's what Duke Ellington used to say all the time (I:

Right). It's like one of my teachers at Berklee used to show to me its like 'Oh that's' when Duke Ellington was doing a clinic he went up to him and went 'Yeah, that's like that double diminished chord' and Duke Ellington looks down at his hands and he goes 'Man! That's just a dominant chord' (I: Laughs...Right). He didn't, you know, they didn't really think of it in terms of technical...they just knew the sounds and what they can play over each sound and (I: Right), and to me like some cats have to learn that (I: Yeah). You know, Lovano didn't start coming into his own until he was in his thirties (I: Right). You know, umm...You know I didn't have, I mean I had a good ear, I've always had a good ear, but I didn't start really getting it until all of a sudden I was like 'I have to get it. (I: mmm) I have to practice. I have to figure out what these cats...' (I: mmm) 'How do I make changes?'...Well, it takes you, it takes time, of sitting there transcribing and playing through things slowly and figuring out *how* someone does something. Well, you know why is that called making the changes?

I: So who would you listen to? Who would you transcribe? Who were the main...?

J: Ummm...the first cat I was, you know when I've first got out here I was, I...I, I started getting into Hank Mobley, whose like probably your most basic, swinging, real vocablulary-esque player, um, and I started transcribing some of his stuff 'cause it was easy and I could make sense of it all (I: yep) and it was melodic (I: yep). So I was start listening to you know like a two-five, you

know and it'd be like um (sings)...and I'd be like 'OK, well that's over a two five' because I'd count the changes, the number of bars in the er, in the blues and I'd be like 'OK. Well where does this line fall? OK, well it falls over the, the ninth and tenth bars of the blues. Let me write that down and write the changes over it and then I'll compare the, I'll compare the changes with the line that I just, that he just played over it'. And I'm looking at it, and, and you know it's always been taught, you know Berklee I learned this, that 7s move to 3rds from minor to dominant and er, but I never really got it for some reason like. I mean I kinda knew it, I and I knew it by sound but I never really knew what I was doing. You know, sometimes I'd get lucky and play the changes but, and lots, most of the time I wouldn't (I: mmm). And then finally I was like 'Man! OK, let me, let me get this' so I started practicing, you know moving 7 to 3rd all the time. The 7 on the end of 4 to the 3rd on the downbeat of the dominant chord and I would take that 3rd and I'd resolve to a 3rd on the major chord. And, er from that it would, I would start copying other people's lines (I: yep). Like I did Hank Mobley, 'Trane of course (I: yep). 'Trane was the perfect example in his early days (I: yep) of like playing straight ahead (I: yep) vocabulary. You know, he could just do it double the speed of everybody else could, (I: yep) umm...what else...it

I: So, that's...

J: You know what I'm saying, it's...

I: Oh, yeah...

J: That was the process, and eventually I started, and then I started to get into more modern players. OK well how does their two-five fit over that two-five that I used to play? Same kind of thing only different sounds (I: right) and different possibilities, different ways of, of thinking (I: right). And then it, and then, the it starts to, and then you get you ear combined with your. That's the whole thing that everyone misses...just, the combination of ear and brain (I: rights). Cats younger, who are younger they only use their ear because they're, it's too time consuming to use your brain (I: right). And it's too, they think it's too hard (I: right), you know. No one, like when you're young all you think about is fast, powerful (I: right) and, you know quick, it's like all Americans (I: Laughs). You know, we want the quick bucks we never have time and patience for anything. If we did, we'd be a lot better off.

I: So, you think the intellect slows down the process?

J: Yeah, so we tend to like push the intellect aside and go 'I just know what it sounds like', instead of dealing with the intellect at the same time as the ear which ends up becoming a kind of drag 'cause then we have to, you know you have to kind of work backwards again and go 'OK' now you have to move back now you have to be intellectual and figure it out for a while.

I: So let's talk a little about how you developed your vocabulary, or learned how to get your own sound… .

J: Well, I'd be playing mostly like arpeggios and the bebop scale. I understood the diminished scale and used that a bit to add a bit of colour to my playing. When I got to Berklee I began hearing other cats in the practice rooms and I was like 'Man! What's that?' They were playing bad stuff, you know really rich and sophisticated sounds and intervals that just blew all the stuff I'd been playing away. Man I sounded so simple and kinda thin sounding, you know? I mean they sounded modern like, you know Brecker and Branford [Marsalis] and all these kinda cats…Kenny Garrett. Totally different. I'd try and pick up the kinda thing that they were playing but it would always just slip away from me, you know like a wet fish! It just wasn't like the kinda tonal 3rds and 7ths and 9ths stuff that I was playing…When they'd get up at a jam session and play over a standard or a blues they'd have this unbelievable range and big pool of ideas to play off of with these big intervals and patterns all over their horn…Soon enough I was introduced to the modes and the melodic minor scale and it just opened this world up to me. I began to think differently about changes and scales and stuff and I was like 'Man! I can hear what these guys are playing!'. The theory is pretty straightforward, you know. They told me to just think of the melodic minor and find out where that fits in terms of the chord you're playing. So for instance if you have a m7♭5 chord you can play something using a melodic minor scale that starts a minor 3rd over the chord in the chart then over the V chord just play the melodic minor a half-step above then just play the ordinary minor chord over the one. It's amazing that kinda

modern sound you get all because of the altered tones that you get when you put the different melodic minor scales to work...So that scale gave me another kinda compositional tool to play with.

I: Again, to what extent is this just stuff you know and to what extent is it theorised or intellectualised?

J: Well this is always the problem. As soon as people start theorising and make up these formulas, cats stop listening. Me personally, once I've learned the theory I have to related it to the records. You know, see how cats have done it in the past. They don't just like stick to the rules, they play what sounds good for them at the time. But, it's true people are thinking about these things like too intellectually and you can tell when people just start playing like exercises for the melodic minor scale and play them over an altered chord a half-step up. That doesn't tell you anything and it doesn't show that you've learned anything...I mean it was great for me to suddenly realise what was behind all those great sounds that I was hearing cats play but I didn't necessarily *rely* on all these diagrams and charts and exercises up and down my horn. You can always tell whether or not a cat is *listening* when they play. It's so important to play with your ear and hear what you're going to play rather than think it. You've gotta have a good ear.

I: A lot of what playing jazz is is about listening, right? So, it's not necessarily about coming onto the stage and blowing your thing?

J: Exactly! Once you really get into playing jazz, it just becomes a way of hearing sounds and experiencing music. It's kinda funny though cos when you first start listening to jazz, you don't really get it; it's just kinda weird sounds that have no real sense. But when you get into it properly and you start learning, you begin to hear all the mechanics and you dig someone's sound cos they've got this great technique. Cos, you know, you're shedding all the time...But once you've done your shedding – and I mean like five hours a day, at least, man, sometimes I was playing from when I woke up and, like right through the day without eating. I wouldn't recommend that to my, the kids I teach now but, it's real important that you do all the transcribing and, you know learning about the theory. But then you've got to get all of that out of the way. You don't often consciously choose what you're gonna play right then but you have a whole load of things that you can say when it's the right time to say them and that comes out, you know, when you're playing in the groove with other people. You can't force it out.

I: Now, another thing. How much do you think that, you know, do you think that there are notions of virtuosity in the sort of establishment, the jazz conservatory (J: Absolutely!!)? There is a kind of pressure for a young saxophonist to kind of know, say a lot of Michel Brecker, or quite sophisticated, um (Yeah) harmonic vocabulary (yeah) in order to prove themselves at jam sessions.

J: You know when you go to a college, a place like Berklee, Berklee is definitely not for everyone. It's for aggressive people (I: right) and it's for people who know all they want to do is music (I: right) and that's all they can do really. Um, and that's what I felt. I didn't apply to any other school but Berklee (I: right). You know I'd already gotten awarded a scholarship to go there, um, and all I knew was that all I wanted to do was play music. So it's kinda like, yeah when I got there, it didn't put me off, I mean yeah I was scared, I was like 'Man! These players are freakin' monsters'. But yes they're competing like businessmen, you know we're, you know there's still competing, but not really. Everyone wants to see everyone get better, they really do, you know I honestly believe that. It's just that, you know you get up on stage and your ego takes over sometimes. But, in L.A. it's a little different than it is in New York (I: right). In New York that still happens (I: right), you know, because there's other cats trying to prove that they can do things that other cats can't. And you know, we need that though. It's the same thing as anything you do. There's other cats who are better mathematicians than others. You know, I mean it happens, a natural part of, I think of human life, of human existence. But I think in jazz we wanna help each other. I'm always, man if I hear someone play something hipper than me, or take, you know, just a killin' solo, I'll be like 'Man! What are you sheddin'?' (I: right) You know, tell me. Tell me something.

I: But also, I've seen people do the reverse of that. They've just used a particular pattern, say a Kenny Garrett lick and they've repeated it, and

repeated it and repeated it and it tires me out but they still get a recognition for it…

J: Of course they do. You know, but it also depends also, um, this gets into a whole nother issue but their ethnicity (I: right), and their race (I: right). It just depends. Do they have the jazz look, quote unquote? That plays a big part in it too you'd be surprised. It's like any other thing, politics, politics, politics.

I: So there is politics?

J: Absolutely. There is definitely politics. I mean, you know. But it's a politics that's not peer-to-peer. It's the world outside of jazz. Like the cats who, for record deals and stuff like that. That's not all based on how well you play. Antonio Hart is a prime example (I: right). That cat, you know, he wasn't anything really, you know he was OK, you know he wasn't a killing player by any stretch of the imagination. Yet he was on all of those Roy Hargrove (I: yep) records and all, why? 'Cause he looked like a jazz musician (I: right). You know (I: right)? He looked like the sophisticated cat, you know, who could play the saxophone. And really, I mean, he wasn't playing too much saxophone and I be you he'd admit that too. I mean now, he's a monster, he took some time off and shed. But, you know, it's, it's just that the way record companies look at it, although those are few and far between today, for jazz, umm, you know there really, the politics happen outside of the jazz (I: right)

not, not some much between peer to peer (I: right) I mean it's it really doesn't happen like that.

I: But do you think it has any effect on the newcomer? Because there are so many people isolated from jazz all around them, like I was brought up in a small village and I heard jazz through records, and these guys, like Antonio Hart, were setting the style for me, they defined what jazz was...

J: Are these cats telling a story rather than reiterating, is that what you're asking? (I: right) Ummm, at that point, I don't think Antonio Hart was (I: right), but you know what, there's nothing wrong with that...It's like Branford was the same thing. He was just recorded really young (I: right), you know, and like he's admitted that many times its like, 'Man! Those recordings', man he's definitely not proud of those recordings, but that's how he, you know...once you kind of do that and you put a record like that out there when you're young it kind of sets a standard, you better be progressing every record or there's going to be people not going to get your records (I: right). So, yeah I think to a certain extent, you know you got your cats in jazz who are just preservers, Benny Green for example, um, you know he's a killin' piano player but he doesn't, to me, he doesn't push the envelope. You know you have your different kind of cats. Wynton Marsalis was pushing the envelope at one point and then all of a sudden he got this job at the Lincoln Centre and he decided to preserve and now he really doesn't push the envelope any more, you know, although Branford, that's what he does man, he pushes the envelope man try

to constantly progress jazz rather that regress, you know, err...So, you're going to have a mixture of both in jazz. It's the same kind of thing as America. We're always looking back, looking back, looking back, instead of, you know looking forward as we should be mostly.

I: Now, so what is a good solo?

J: Like what kind of style, what kind of...?

I: Just, what are the elements, you know...?

J: A good solo um...to me, I mean it's different for everyone, it's you know...I like to hear someone who is taking risks, um, er changes and stuff are, you know, I just assume that umm, good player can make those so (I: right) that's not, you know. I'm interested in hearing people take risks when they're playing, get themselves into a bind and see how they get out. Really listening to, I'm more really interested in the group sound which I think is kind of lacking a little in today's music as it wasn't lacking so much, back in the day. It's more like now, well 'I'm the soloist and here's my back up'. That 's not really how it is. That shouldn't be how it is.

I: As a teacher, what kind of values are you trying to transmit? What do you think of the methods, like Jamey Aebersold's for instance?

J: These guys don't have bad methods, I'll never knock their methods as people use them and they get buy and they have accomplishments...To me it's just, you know, for me first and foremost it's you know that I know that they're practising constantly. What are they practising? Well, you know I give them methods to practice. You know that the problem I think with teaching today, it's I think that a lot of cats they'll be like go home and practice but they don't know what to practice so he goes home and he just *plays*. Well there's a big difference between playing and practicing, you know, so...So there's a big difference between playing a practicing and, er, I don't think that teachers. Most educators don't know how to teach that. Like for swing, it's still straight eight-notes but it's just where to accent it that matters. So I get a new guy and he asks 'how do I play jazz?'. Well, first thing I tell him is take your tongue out of your mouthpiece if it's a horn player. 'I want you to play your eighth-notes with pretty much no tongue in it and I want you to play straight (sings scale)'. So that's what they first do for me in all 12 keys 'cause they're gonna need all those keys, you see what I'm saying (I: Right!)? But at the end of the day learning a tune in all 12 keys means that you can do just that: learn a tune in all 12 keys! I mean, you know, what real use is that? So, really it's important to go beyond just the practicing. It's much more important to know your way around a progression and understand what it is trying to do and then you can kinda react to that and make a good solo. Just memorizing changes doesn't tell you anything. Cats think that a song is just a set of chord symbols that they've like got imprinted in their memory. But knowing a tune is knowing all the forms that are in it, all the different implications and sounds

and colours you can bring out of it. They never tell you this stuff in school you've just got to work it out for yourself. So, Ok where was I. Right. Then the next thing I ask is 'Ok. How are we gonna get your tonguing together? How are we gonna get your feel together?' Well, *I'm* not gonna do it. Hank Mobley's gonna do it. So first assignment, I get everyone to try and transcribe from Hank Mobley's *Soul Station* record, the track *Dig Dis*, a blues, B♭, real easy head, memorable, solos real simple and vocabulary-esque but still melodic and swinging. And I have 'em transcribe the whole solo, memorise not written down. I mean writing down doesn't do much for me (I: No, no). After that, usually they'll come back and play it pretty well with the recording but as soon as I take the recording off their tongue goes all over the place. So I go over the first chorus and I want them to play perfectly, the way Hank Mobley plays it 'cause they always miss all the subtleties and where he's taking you and where he's not. So I'll explain it to them and say 'Listen to the way you're playing it' and I'll show them the play they're playing it and then I'll say listen to the way Hank's playing it, and I'll play them the way Hank's playing it. Like, 'D'you here the difference, d'you hear the difference?'. One cat will get it write off the bat you know? There's a lot of natural talent associated with playing jazz you know?

I: What about the idea of having an individual sound?

J: It's like, my thing is to that once we get my students to do the Hank Mobley stuff, I'll say 'Ok, let's do another one. Let's do 'Trane', an early solo of

'Trane's which is easy, if there is an easy solo of 'Trane...let's do Lee Morgan next, let's do a different instrument. OK, let's do a modern saxophone player. Here's um, Mark Turner solo. Let's do another modern player. Here's Kenny Garrett or Greg Osby or someone like that'. So I'd be like OK. This happens for the more advanced players. Once they start doing that they start developing their own sound anyways, because now they go, 'Man! That's a hip sound. Like the old sound but that's a hip sound too' and all of a sudden their sound becomes an amalgamation of sounds and eventually what they do is that they formulate their own sound that they wanna sound like. Like they wanna have the darkness, the eighth-note of Hank Mobley but they wanna have the time like Branford, and you know...like a little bit of that and a little bit of this...and that's where their stuff ends up coming about...And I think that's how a lot of cats did it (I: Right). Their sound just comes about from what their experiences are.

I: How much of this is conscious, do you think?

J: When you first start blowing, I always say to my students, I'm like 'Man! I want that two-five in your blowing. Period, period that's it. I want that the two-five in the blowing' (I: Right). And they'll do it for a while and eventually they'll only start to play half of the two-five and start to play their own thing, and eventually they'll start to play...they'll forget the first half and play the end half (I: Right). And all of a sudden they understand how to play the two-five (I: Right). And then it becomes, yeah the might play that line

somewhere down the road, a long way down the road again. But why? Because that is what they felt at that time. And I don't think that is a conscious thing, they just think 'Oh, here's where I'm at with my ideas at this particular moment'. The ultimate goal is to get to true improvisation which is, you're not dealing with anything but trying to formulate a solo as a group (I: Right). You, know, you just happen to be the head of the boat if you're the soloist on that tune.

I: And you're just responding to whatever sounds are out there?

J: Right. You're responding, you're steering the ship a little bit. At first you may lay out a couple of ideas and then say 'Let's see. Ok which ones will take off?' And then you develop your ideas and your motives and you know you'll see where it takes you and sometimes you get in a binds and the way you get out of them is by traditional steps if you need to (I: Right). And those are almost like backup ideas, you know (I: Right). Ok so you're stuck on a line and so (sings, a common two-five pattern). It's like the word *the*. Why does that come out in your language? It's because you need to connect it to other things. Maybe new ideas, maybe old ideas. I always relate this thing to language man. That's all it is. If you don't *know* the language, how the hell can you speak it? If you don't know the word 'the' or 'I' or 'we' or 'soda' or whatever, how can you even ask for it, or talk about it? You can't. And I don't think the word 'the' is...that I'm stealing someone's stuff. I mean I need it to communicate to a certain degree, you know what I'm saying (I:

yep)? So I think it's vital. Vocabulary is one of the most important things beginning to intermediate improviser has to know. I always tell my students you know make sure, I love it when students say 'I don't really listen to modern cats, I just listen to old', I'm like 'Why not? These are the people...you're going to be one of these people at one point. Do you want the people to not buy your records?' Man, I buy everything the full spectrum. Man, there's no arguing. You can't just listen to the old traditional music. Yeah, it should be the foundation of what you're playing. It's the foundation of what Chris Potter plays but you'd never know it. He doesn't really play that that at all any more. Yeah, I'll listen to him play with Red Rodney back in the early nineties and all he was doing was playing Bird. Up and down the horn. You listen to him now and he's one of the baddest saxophone players on the earth! (I: Right) And he plays nothing like that. You know improvisation is...the more advanced you are, all you're doing is it's a different way of thinking, you're just getting different ways to look at things. Like you know Brecker. I can't stand his sound but he's probably the greatest player of the saxophone around. So, I buy his records, man. I transcribe him although I don't like his sound. It's important.

I: You're constantly transforming your self...

J: Exactly. For example, bebop was very scalar and arpeggio based. Modern sounds are based on more triadic, upper structure harmony you know. Denser sounds, more motivic playing. Younger cats, they want the challenge of

playing a tune in 13, you know? It's like the world's begging them to play a tune in 13 in F sharp you know? And they'll shed the crap out of it and they'll play it, you know? And that's important, just as important as playing a B♭ blues by Hank Mobley, you know? So, it's so valid to listen to all these players. You know younger cats; they want it all because they feel that they have to prove themselves. But, you know, you might get cats listening to you and saying 'he's playing a melodic minor scale there, he's been shedding on this or that book'. But to me, none of that matters when you're playing. Actually, if I think about that it won't happen, it won't come out right in the solo. That thinking will slow me down. You know it's always: 'Don't think. Play!'.

Interviews

[Among the cited interviews listed below, I used pseudonyms for those informants who wished to remain anonymous (marked *). In addition to the following cited interviews, throughout the course of my research I also conducted informal interviews which were not recorded and are therefore not directly cited. Both these, and the untranscribed recordings of formal interviews that were lost in April 2003, I refer to in terms of general themes covered.]

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